

**VA SPECIAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM IN  
PSYCHIATRIC RESEARCH/NEUROSCIENCES (INCLUDING TRAUMATIC BRAIN  
INJURIES AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER)  
BEGINNING JULY 1, 2006**

**1. FELLOWSHIP PURPOSE**

This Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) program announcement gives directions to physician applicants and their sponsoring VA facilities about applying for a VA Special Fellowship in Psychiatric Research/Neurosciences (including Traumatic Brain Injuries and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). The purposes of the fellowship are to facilitate research relevant to the health care of veterans, to develop physician potential for healthcare leadership positions, and to contribute to VA and the nation's health work force needs.

This two-year fellowship offers post-residency research, educational, and clinical training to eligible physician candidates. These include outstanding physicians who have completed their Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) or American Osteopathic Association (AOA) Executive Committee of the Council on Post-doctoral Training (ECCOPT) specialty and subspecialty residency training in adult psychiatry, neurology, physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R), or other specialties related to the neurosciences.

**2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Research, education, and clinical fellowship training experiences may focus on such areas as psychiatric disorders, neurologic disorders including disorders of the brain, traumatic injuries of the head or spine, or related debilitating diseases. Examples include but are not limited to traumatic injury of the central or peripheral nervous system, epilepsy, malignancy, myelitis, strokes, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and dementia.

The fellowship places particular emphasis on excellent mentoring. Outstanding VA psychiatrists, neurologists, physiatrists, neuroscientists, or other physicians and scientists in relevant specialties serve as preceptors. The Fellowship Program Director, preceptors, and applicants work together to design a program of rich research, education, and clinical training experiences. The Fellowship Program Director serves as the primary mentor and, along with other preceptors, guides fellowship participants throughout the two-year program.

Approximately 75 percent of the fellowship time is to be devoted to biomedical or clinical research including didactic education related to research. Approximately 25 percent of the fellowship time is allocated to VA clinical activities at the local VA facility. Fellows must conduct the majority of their responsibilities at a VA facility. Should a program wish to have fellows conduct clinical activities at non-VA sites, prior written approval from Office of Academic Affiliations must be obtained. Across the entire special fellowship experience, fellows are expected to carry out a major portion of their research and educational activities at a VA facility.

### 3. POLICIES

a. **Governance** The fellowship program for post-residency physicians is governed by M-8, Part II, Chapter 4, “Fellowship Programs for Physicians and Dentists” and supplemental documents from OAA. The fellowship program will conform to the principals of “Common Program Requirements” of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education ([http://www.acgme.org/acWebsite/dutyHours/dh\\_dutyHoursCommonPR.pdf](http://www.acgme.org/acWebsite/dutyHours/dh_dutyHoursCommonPR.pdf)).

b. **Fellow Selection Criteria** Applicants must have completed an ACGME- or AOA ECCOPT-accredited physician residency program, and not be enrolled simultaneously in any accredited physician residency or fellowship program. The fellowship award is for two years with an option for a competitive third year to complete an ongoing research project. Annual and final progress reports are required.

c. **Facility Selection Criteria**

- (1) The sponsoring VA facility must be affiliated with a medical school having an ACGME-accredited residency program in the applicant’s specialty and subspecialty.
- (2) The Chief of Staff, Associate Chief of Staff for Research, or the Associate Chief of Staff for Education must support the application and endorse the potential contribution of the proposed project to the development of the applicant’s academic, research, or clinical career.
- (3) The sponsoring VA facility must designate a well-qualified Fellowship Program Director as the primary mentor to guide the fellow’s research, educational, and clinical training.
- (4) The sponsoring VA facility must have a process to assure that documents required for the appointment of post-residency Special Fellows have been verified and are in order.
- (5) If the sponsoring VA facility is approved as a site for other VA Special Fellowships, relevant applications should be considered through those programs rather than through this program.
- (6) Because this Special Fellowship is not a site-based program, approval of a particular application does not guarantee that future applications from the same facility shall be approved solely because of historic participation.

d. **Appointment and Compensation** OAA will provide funds for stipends and fringe benefits. The stipend will be based on years of previously completed accredited physician residency training (or equivalent per OAA policy) and on VA stipend rates based on rates paid by the local affiliated school of medicine and affiliated index hospital.

e. **VACO Support** OAA will provide funds to VA facilities for fellows’ stipends and fringe benefits.

f. **Educational detail** Fellows may be detailed to other educational institutions without loss of pay, but under no circumstances may the total time spent in non-VA institutions exceed one-sixth of the total hours a fellow is in a pay and training status with VA.

g. **Liability** Fellows will be protected from personal liability while providing professional services as a trainee at a VA facility under the Federal Employees Liability Reform and Tort Compensation Act, 28 U.S.C. 2679(b)-(d). Should a program wish to have fellows conduct clinical activities at non-VA sites, prior written approval from Office of Academic Affiliations must be obtained.

h. **Expenses** Except as specified above, expenses connected to the fellows' recruitment, educational activities, or research are not funded under this program. Transportation to the VA facility and housing arrangements are the sole responsibility of the selected fellows.

i. **Service Obligation** There is no service obligation after completion of the fellowship program. However, fellows are encouraged to seek VA employment. Program faculty mentorship is expected to include career counseling, including assistance in obtaining VA employment.

j. **Identification of Fellowship Status** Fellows must identify the VA support of their fellowship in all reports and presentations during the fellowship program and after the fellowship program if the report or presentation is related to research conducted during the fellowship program. Failure to do so while in the fellowship program may result in termination of the fellowship.

#### 4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR FELLOWS

a. All nominees to VA's Special Fellowships Program must have a current, unrestricted license to practice medicine in any state or territory of the United States. (Training licenses are restricted licenses and cannot be accepted.) The license does not have to be from the state in which the fellowship program is located.

b. Applicants must be American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) or ECCOPT-recognized board certified or eligible with demonstration of active pursuit of board certification.

c. U.S. citizens shall be given priority in selection. A citizen of a country other than United States must possess an appropriate visa in order to participate in this program.

d. Graduates of foreign medical schools must have evidence of Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) certification that is stamped "valid indefinitely".

e. Applicants must be willing to accept a full-time, temporary VA position upon entering this training program. Applicants who are VA staff physicians must sign a statement confirming

their voluntary acceptance of a change in appointment and reduced pay for the duration of the training.

f. Appointments will be made under 38 USC 7406 for two years, except if extended per approval by OAA.

g. PAID Codes. Use Pay Plan L; type of appointment code 6; pay basis 1; grade 00; step N; remark code 99; occupational series 0602-64; and a paid assignment code of H1, Sub Account 1046.

## **5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

a. The Fellowship Program Director serves as the primary mentor for the fellows and coordinates all aspects of the fellow's program. The Fellowship Program Director must be active in a field relevant to psychiatry, neurology, PM&R, or the neurosciences, e.g., biochemistry (neurotransmitters), endocrinology, immunology, infectious diseases, virology, or other relevant basic sciences and disciplines.

b. The Fellowship Program Director must have a proven track record of basic science or clinical research with relevant publications, awards, current research projects, and current funding sources.

c. The Fellowship Program Director must be an experienced, committed mentor of trainees and have the local administrative resources in place to assure appropriate fellowship support.

## **6. SELECTION CRITERIA**

Applications shall be judged on:

a. Participant's demonstration of adequate preparation to participate in the proposed program.

b. Program Director's/Mentor's demonstration of ability to satisfactorily supervise the proposed program.

c. The value of the proposed area of inquiry to veterans and to VA.

d. The likelihood of being able to complete the proposed project in the approved timeframe.

e. Sufficiency of support from applying facility.

f. Extent of other Special Fellowship Support received by the applying facility.

## 7. MAILING INSTRUCTIONS

- a. **Due Date and Number of Copies** Submit **four copies** of the application to arrive by close of business **May 31, 2006**.
- b. **Mail delivery service** Bioterrorism precautions being taken with U.S. Postal Service mail to VA Central Office cause considerable delays in delivery. Therefore, please send applications via Federal Express or other carrier.
- c. **Mailing Address**  
  
Stuart Gilman, MD, MPH  
Director, Special Fellowships (142)  
Office of Academic Affiliations  
VA Central Office  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420
- d. **Faxed applications will not be accepted**

## 8. OAA CONTACT PERSONS

For questions, please contact Dr. Stuart Gilman by e-mail at [stuart.gilman@va.gov](mailto:stuart.gilman@va.gov) or by phone at 562.826.5323.

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Due Date.** The application, including the transmittal letter from the VA facility Director, must be received in OAA (142) no later than Wednesday, May 31, 2006 for applicants intending to begin July 1, 2006. Applications for a start date other than that shall be considered, and must be specified in the application. Applications via fax cannot be accepted.

2. **The application packet** should be no longer than 20 pages total and must contain the following:

**a. Transmittal letter** from the VA facility Director endorsing the applicant. The letter must also contain the name, title, routing symbol, phone number, e-mail address, and fax number of the Fellowship Program Director.

**b. Information from Applicant**

- (1) Curriculum vitae that include relevant publications plus current, past, or pending grant support (Limit 3 pages).
- (2) Career plan outlining how the proposed training relates to career aspirations (Limit 2 pages).

**c. Information from Program Director**

- (1) Statement accepting the role of primary mentor for the fellow's development and research, educational, and clinical progress. Commitment to work with the fellow and VA facility to develop an individualized educational plan and specific VA and VISN orientation for the fellow.
- (2) Commitment to provide individual and programmatic evaluation.
- (3) Brief curriculum vitae (Biosketch is acceptable) providing adequate information to demonstrate program director's qualifications in research and education.
- (4) Outline of experience in mentoring advanced fellows, if any. Include previous fellows' career choices and accomplishments including academic titles, grant successes, and publications in nationally recognized journals.
- (5) Description of administrative infrastructure resources to provide fellowship support.
- (6) Description of the educational environment, including relationship of trainee to other investigators and clinicians in fields related to the applicant's proposed area of research.

- (7) Other relevant resources available to the fellow including laboratory and animal facilities, VA and other databases, computer support, statistical support, office space, and telephones.

**d. Information jointly from Applicant and Program Director – Proposed Fellowship Plan**

- (1) Proposed Fellowship Plan – a concise outline of the proposed plan for the program (it is expected that this plan will be more fully developed should the application be approved). Please address issues including:
- (2) Didactic Education. Outline the specific plan for didactic education related to the fellowship program to foster the fellow's skill development.
- (3) Research Activity. Briefly describe the proposed research activity. Address the significance of the research area, and the relevance of the project to VA's mission. Include hypotheses, description of the research methods likely to be used, and anticipated data to be collected. Although the proposal should be developed in close collaboration with the preceptor, the applicant should develop the proposal. Emphasize the potential value of the proposed areas of inquiry to veteran's health issues.
- (4) Evaluation. Describe evaluation methods and milestones that will be used to determine the fellow's progress.