



UCLA Postdoctoral Fellowship Training Program in Addressing Infectious Disease Threats

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the purpose of this training program?

To prepare individuals for academic careers as physician-scientists investigating topics related to new and evolving infectious disease threats.

Who sponsors the fellowship?

This fellowship program is offered by the Division of Infectious Diseases of the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). It is funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), one of the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), through a T32 funding mechanism.

Who is eligible to apply?

Eligibility requirements include:

- U.S. citizenship or permanent residency
- MD or DO, with or without a PhD
- May be in any field of medicine (adult or pediatric), not limited to internal medicine/infectious diseases
- Research activity/interest in any aspect of infectious diseases, including any type of research ranging from epidemiology to policy to basic science (domestic or global)

When does the fellowship begin and how long does it last?

Beginning in December, applications are accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis. The priority deadline is March 1, 2024, for a July 1, 2024 start date. In some cases, an exception can be made to start after

July 1. The appointment period lasts for up to three years, but most fellows complete postdoctoral training after two years. Fellowship appointments are reviewed and renewed annually.

How many new fellowship slots are available each year?

This program currently has four positions (typically two fellows per year).

Who directs the fellowship and what is their experience?

The fellowship program is directed by Otto Yang, MD, Risa Hoffman, MD, MPH, and Karin Nielsen, MD.

Dr. Yang is a Professor of Medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases, David Geffen School of Medicine, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He is a successful physician-scientist who has had an NIH-funded laboratory research program on HIV immunology since 1997. He has a long track record of training biomedical researchers including physician-scientists and was prior PI of a T32 for physician-scientists training in laboratory-based virology research at UCLA.

Dr. Hoffman is a Clinical Professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. She is a physician-scientist who participates in both clinical trials and in implementation science and participates in research in Los Angeles and southern Africa. She has a long track record of mentoring both U.S. and international trainees. She serves as core faculty of the adult Infectious Diseases Fellowship Program.

Dr. Nielsen is a Professor of Pediatrics in the Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Pediatrics at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. She is a successful physician-scientist who has made seminal contributions to pediatric infectious diseases and maternal medicine nationally and internationally. She has an extensive track record of mentoring in clinical research, including many physician-scientists.

What are the goals of the fellowship?

This T32 focuses on career development for physicians in any area of medicine (adult and pediatric) who want to pursue a career in academic medicine and have an interest in infectious diseases research. Our fellows have access to a rich breadth and depth of faculty mentors who perform research in areas ranging from molecular biology, clinical trials, health services, health policy, and social and behavioral science. Each fellow has a primary and at least one secondary mentor who can provide expertise in the development of skills needed to launch a career as a physician-scientist. The overarching goal is to produce the next generation of physician-scientists meeting the challenges of the spectrum of infectious diseases present and future. Our program has an outstanding record of supporting fellows to receive NIH K-awards and of transitioning fellows to faculty positions at UCLA.

How is the mentorship structured?

As T32 fellowship Directors, Drs. Yang, Hoffman, and Nielsen provide oversight for all fellows, ensuring that the goals are being attained, milestones met, and that progress toward the fellow's career goals are on track.

Depending on the discipline of the fellow and her/his research focus, either Dr. Yang (basic virology and immunology), Hoffman (global health implementation science and adult clinical trials), and/or Nielsen (pediatrics clinical trials and global health), or another UCLA faculty mentor will co-mentor the fellow, overseeing progress on the fellow's research project(s) and providing input on career development.

Working together, the fellow's mentorship team will provide perspective on multiple aspects of being a physician-scientist studying infectious diseases. Fellows are expected to meet with their primary mentor approximately weekly and with their entire mentorship team (including at least one of the T32 Directors Yang/Hoffman/Nielsen) quarterly.

We can also help engage fellows with any number of informal faculty mentors at UCLA and elsewhere, to provide a rich and diverse mentorship experience. Faculty and staff in the Divisions of Infectious Diseases and Pediatric Infectious Diseases are also available to work closely with fellows on issues such as IRB applications, scientific writing, budget development and management, understanding university and Federal policies, and other practical matters key to a successful academic research career.

As our T32 fellowship program is small (four fellows at any one time), mentorship meetings are regular and frequent, and we strive to customize each fellow's experience to meet the individual's specific needs and career goals.

Is there any required coursework for postdoctoral fellows?

All trainees will be required to participate in the following courses and activities as part of the T32:

- 1) Enroll and complete [UCLA C234 Ethics and Accountability in Biomedical Research](#), a course comprised of five sessions of two hours each, providing a centralized forum for instructing graduate students and postdoctoral fellows about the responsible conduct of research. This course combines lectures, and case series discussions on issues of ethics and scientific integrity.
- 2) Enroll and complete [UCLA M261 Ethics in Patient-Oriented Research](#), ten sessions of two hours each, covering current issues in responsible conduct of clinical research, including reporting of research, basis for authorship, issues in genetic research, principles and practice of research on humans, conflicts of interest, Institutional Review Board (IRB), and related topics.
- 3) Complete online [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative \(CITI\), Human Research Basic Course for Biomedical Researchers](#). This course includes modules and testing on: The Belmont Report, History and Ethical Principles, Basic Institutional Review Board (IRB) Regulations and Review Process, Informed Consent, Records-Based Research, Research with Protected Populations – Vulnerable Subjects, FDA-Regulated Research, Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects, and a special section for issues unique to UCLA.
- 4) Participate in monthly [T32 Core Curriculum](#), which includes an hour-long session held via Zoom or Zoom-in person hybrid, held jointly with HIV prevention T32 fellows. Examples of topics covered include working with IRBs, scientific writing, grant writing, time management and

organizational skills, and securing and negotiating jobs. The curriculum also includes an annual presentation by each fellow of research “work-in-progress”.

- 5) If based in Los Angeles, participate in a quarterly mentoring breakfast with faculty leaders focused on building community with other early career investigators and centered around peer mentoring.

What other educational resources are available to me as a postdoctoral fellow?

In addition to the required coursework, there are various opportunities for additional education and training. These include, but are not limited to, weekly Infectious Diseases and Pediatric Infectious Diseases Fellowship didactic lectures, Infectious Diseases Fellowship journal clubs, Infectious Diseases Division Grand Rounds, participation in UCLA seed grant programs, submission of abstracts to national/international conferences, and other specific courses, workshops, and seminars relevant to your area of focus.

What resources are available to me as a postdoctoral fellow?

As an NIH-funded postdoctoral fellow, you will receive a stipend set by NIH, based on your number of years of experience after finishing your doctoral degree. For details, please visit:

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-23-076.html> (scroll down to the section for postdoctoral fellows).

You will also be eligible for the University of California Postdoctoral Scholar Benefits Plan (PSBP). This comprehensive program offers you medical, dental, vision, life and AD&D insurance, short-term disability insurance and voluntary long-term disability insurance. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.garnett-powers.com/postdoc/>

As part of the fellowship package, each fellow will have a budget for each year (funds are administered by the Division of Infectious Diseases at UCLA), to be used to cover the costs of expenses such as coursework, computer equipment and software, travel, conference fees, office supplies, etc. While the specific amount varies somewhat from year to year based on NIH funding, these resources are usually more than adequate to cover necessary expenses. UCLA business and fund managers will work closely with fellows to develop budgets and manage expenses.

Opportunities exist at UCLA to apply for HIV pilot/seed research grants and international travel grants, through bodies such as the UCLA AIDS Institute/UCLA-Charles Drew University (CDU) Center for Aids Research (CFAR). These are competitive grants (typically offered annually) and can be an important way for fellows to launch or supplement international pilot HIV research projects. We work closely with fellows to submit high-quality proposals for these grants.

There are a number of centers and institutes at UCLA that have cores which provide free consultations and support to fellows and junior faculty on a wide variety of research topics and methods, including the [UCLA AIDS Institute/the Center for HIV Identification, Prevention and Treatment Services \(CHIPTS\)](#), the [UCLA-CDU CFAR](#), and [Translation Science Institute \(CTSI\)](#). We are well connected to these centers and can provide easy access to fellows.

What is the application process?

Applications are accepted beginning in December 2023 and will be reviewed on a rolling basis. The priority deadline is March 1, 2024 for a July 1, 2024 start date.

The application form gives clear instructions on what application materials must be submitted, including letters of recommendation submitted on your behalf.

Interviews with the T32 Directors will be arranged upon receipt of the completed application and can take place either in person or by phone.

Who can I speak with if I have questions?

Please email Stephanie Buchbinder (sbuchbinder@mednet.ucla.edu) with any questions. Correspondence can take place via email, or a time can be arranged to speak by phone.