

Residents and Fellows Respond to Coronavirus

"As a preventive medicine resident during the COVID-19 pandemic, I've had the opportunity to witness the value of public health measures to protect the health of Californians. I've also gained understanding in importance of transparency and sound judgment to guide decision-making. My experiences during these difficult times will most certainly shape my future career in this field."

Dr. Sheena Gordon-Harris, CDPH Preventive Medicine Resident, MPH, MD

Public Health Problem (Issue)

In March 2020 the Governor of California proclaimed a State of Emergency in California as a result of the threat of COVID-19. California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) Preventive Medicine Residents and Epidemiology Fellows were deployed to the front line of the COVID-19 response.

Taking Action (Intervention)

CDPH runs two training programs, Preventive Medicine Residency (PMR) and the California Epidemiologic Investigation Service Fellowship (Cal-EIS), which are supported by the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant. PMR is a two-year residency program in which physicians gain knowledge, skill and experience in preventive medicine and public health. Cal-EIS is a one-year fellowship program in which recent MPH graduates gain applied epidemiology skills and experience.

PMR Dr. Sheena Gordon-Harris served as Medical Lead of the County drive-through COVID-19 testing site. This included management of clinical staff, and training staff, medical students, paramedics and members of the national guard to perform nasal swab tests. Dr. Gordon-Harris monitored infection control procedures and led briefings, quality improvement and patient safety initiatives. She set up satellite testing centers and responded to the press via on-camera interviews. Dr. Gordon-Harris also served as Acting Incident Commander, Operations Chief and liaison to the Lt. Governor and Congressmen who toured the testing site facility.

Also responding to the dire need for physicians to assist in the COVID-19 public health response was PMR Dr. Ada Ezenekwe. Dr. Ezenekwe managed a warmline/email for questions regarding COVID-19 from community physicians. She developed protocols and guidance for local health department clinicians regarding Tuberculosis/COVID-19 coinfection. Dr. Ezenekwe developed FAQ sheets and algorithms for clinic flow to ensure the safety of patients and clinical staff.

Cal-EIS Fellows, Nellie Gottlieb, MPH and Katherine Chen, MPH were deployed to assist in several aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic response. Nellie processed COVID-19 data in order to create a daily coronavirus report for the Governor of California. She also resolved case status in the California Reportable Disease Information Exchange (CalREDIE). Katherine's efforts included entering lab report data into CalREDIE and downloading mobility from Apple and Google to update CDPH online dashboards.

Impact

PMR trains 5 residents per year; Cal-EIS trains approximately 12 Fellows per year. The programs serve as the foundation of a win-win formula that provides public health trainees with real-world experience and hands-on learning opportunities while providing CDPH programs and local health departments with skilled physicians and epidemiologists. Trainees develop competencies and are eligible to work at public health agencies in leadership positions.

Footnotes

N/A

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Healthy People Objective

Epidemiology Services

PHHS Block Grant Funding

50-74% - Significant source of funding

