
Medical Student Senior Elective in HIV Psychiatry

The American Psychiatric Association (**APA**) established this program in 2004, to provide an opportunity for 4th year minority medical students to participate in a one-month clinical or research elective in HIV psychiatry.

With improvements in HIV drug therapy; there is a burgeoning demand to treat the mental health needs of those living longer with the disease. People with HIV have a higher incidence of mental health problems than the general population and, conversely, people with serious mental illness are more at risk for contracting HIV. HIV attacks the brain, causing inflammation and tissue deterioration. Infection of the brain also can lead to clinical depression, mild or moderate thinking problems, and trouble with memory and focus. Unfortunately, the mental health needs of people living with HIV/AIDS are too often overlooked.

Undoubtedly, future physicians need to develop a working knowledge of HIV-related psychiatric and neuropsychiatric issues. The purpose of the *Medical Student Elective in HIV Psychiatry* is to foster the participation of medical students (particularly from racial and ethnic minorities) in HIV-related care and research and provide them with a means of obtaining essential HIV-related mental health training through an integrated approach to patient care.

Description of the Project

The *Senior Elective in HIV Psychiatry* begins with an intensive two-day training in Washington, DC. Topics range from neuropsychiatric complications of HIV, somatic complaints, and mood disorders to special patient populations including people with substance use disorders and/or those suffering from severe mental illnesses. Training modalities include a combination of lectures, role playing, case vignettes, and first-person accounts through interviews with HIV positive people. Students then travel to training sites for their clinical or research experience for the month of September.

To date, forty-five students have completed the full month-long elective. Sites have included: Cambridge Health Alliance/Zinberg Clinic; The New York Presbyterian Hospital at Columbia University; The New York-Presbyterian Hospital Cornell University Center for Special Studies (CSS); Emory University/Grady Infectious Disease Program; Howard University; University of Pittsburgh Medical Center; University of Cincinnati; University of Miami and the University of South Florida (*for a research elective in HIV Neuroimmunology in Psychiatry.*)

The application **deadline is March 31, 2010** with selections to be announced in late April.

Applications are posted online at:

<http://psych.org/Resources/OfficeofHIVPsychiatry/HIVRelatedprofessionaleducation/MInorityMedicalStudentElectiveinHIVPsychiatry.aspx>

Additional information can be obtained from:

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