

The University of Toronto Centre for Quality Improvement and Patient Safety is currently accepting applications to begin a two year training fellowship in quality improvement through the US Veterans Affairs Quality Scholars (VAQS) program.

The VAQS fellowship program began in the late 1990's and has been recognized as one of the most comprehensive and established Quality Improvement (QI) training programs in North America. This two year research program designed to nurture fellows and junior faculty to develop a career in research, in QI and health services, or in QI within the framework of leadership in medical administration, education, or clinical practice. The VAQS program is intended for health care professionals in advanced stages of training or junior faculty who would like to pursue academic careers in quality improvement and patient safety.

The VAQS program is designed using a 'hub and spoke' model. The program center (hub) is at Baylor University Medical School where local faculty run the program centrally, and work in direct partnership with the VA Office of Academic Affiliations, which oversees all Special Fellowship Programs in the VA. There are eight other sites (spokes) in different geographic locations across the United States.

Toronto is the ninth site and the only non-American site for the VAQS program. Sites function independently.

The first session is scheduled to begin July 2019.
Applications must be received by May 15th 2019.

The two-year VAQS fellowship is comprised of four components:

1. Weekly half-day meetings on Friday afternoons. These sessions take place at the downtown location of the Centre for Quality Improvement and Patient Safety (Hospital for Sick Children). The weekly curriculum is as follows:

- 1pm-2pm: in-person group meetings to discuss QI projects, present research, and discuss required course work. (Toronto site only)
- 2pm-3pm: two-way interactive videoconference (TWIV) sessions across all VAQS sites.

2. Mandatory attendance at the VAQS Summer Institute in Houston, Texas. For 2019/2020, dates are Tuesday August 13th 2019 – Thursday August 15th 2019.

3. Research project: fellows are expected to design and develop a research project of appropriate scope and breadth. They will be expected to present and discuss this project at various stages of development throughout the course. At the end of the program, fellows should be able to demonstrate that they have developed competencies needed to promote the scholarship, research and practice of quality improvement, either through publication, implementation of new knowledge or other demonstration of impact.

4. Bi-annual one-on-one meetings with Course Co-Directors and Coordinators to discuss progress, participation and research and academic goals.

Expectations: Fellows are expected to attend all meetings that take place. Fellows are strongly encouraged to submit scientific abstracts for presentation at any of the meetings they attend. Fellows are expected to present their initial plans of work (1st year) and work in progress (2nd year) at the Summer Institute and the Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Forum.

For more information, please visit the VAQS website at www.vaqs.org.

Funding: The cost for one year for the program is \$1700. This will cover required textbooks and videoconference fees. This fee does not cover the travel, lodging, and registration costs for the mandatory conferences per year. Applicants are encouraged to find funding for these activities through their clinical departments or other sources such as awards from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

Application: The Toronto site of the VAQS is now open to applicants from fields other than medicine. Interested applicants must have either completed post-graduate training and be enrolled in subspecialty fellowship training or have obtained a masters degree (or equivalent) from an accredited university program. It is expected that applicants will maintain an active clinical role throughout the duration of the program. Attendance at the TWIV sessions will be mandatory and protected time must be ensured prior to application submission.

Applicants must commit to a **two-year cycle** and attend all external meetings as well as the majority of videoconference sessions and project meetings.

Application Process: The VAQS program mandates that each site restrict class size to small groups of no more than 6 fellows per year; i.e. total class size of 12 fellows. As such, acceptance to the program is competitive.

Interested applicants are asked to submit their CV and a letter of intent including a possible project concept and/or design. Two letters of reference should accompany the application. One of the letters must be from a Department Chair or equivalent in support of the candidate and explicitly state that the applicant will receive protected time and be freed from clinical duty for all 4 components of the curriculum.

Interested individuals may contact Program Directors: Dr. Jessica Liu, MD MSc (Jessica.Liu@uhn.ca), Nely Amaral, RN, BScN (Nely.Amaral@sinaihealthsystem.ca), Dr. Chaim Bell, MD PhD (cbell@mtsinai.on.ca).

Please submit completed applications to:
Ms. MaryJo Raposo (maryjo.raposo@uhn.ca)
Veterans Affairs Quality Scholars Coordinator