Health Services, Outcomes, and Effectiveness Research Training Program
University of Alabama at Birmingham
¯ **2020 AHRQ NRSA T32 Predoctoral Fellowship Application Instructions** ¯

I. <u>OVERVIEW</u>

The Health Services, Outcomes, and Effectiveness Research (HSOER) Training Program at UAB is a mentored research training program in health services & outcomes research (*Kenneth Saag, MD, MSc, PD/PI*). **<u>Until 5:00 PM CST, January 17, 2020</u>**, the program will be accepting applications for open predoctoral positions with a start date of July or August 2020. These are full-time mentored research training fellowships supported by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) through Institutional (T32) National Research Training Awards (NRSA).

Our research and training base includes a partnership of UAB interdisciplinary research centers and programs and is primarily drawn from across 7 UAB Schools (Medicine, Public Health, Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing, Business, and College of Arts and Sciences), offering a pool of over 30 experienced Mentors.

Program Content Areas:

• Healthcare Efficiency and Disparities
• Healthcare Quality Measurement and Improvement
• Patient Centered Outcomes Research
• Comparative Effectiveness Research
• Pharmacoepidemiology and Patient Safety
• Translating Research Evidence into Practice and Policy
• Economic Evaluation and Decision Analytic Modeling
• Health Informatics

The training program prepares independent investigators to pursue careers in health services & outcomes research focused on translating research evidence into practice and on comparative effectiveness research (CER) and patient centered outcomes research (PCOR) methods for evaluating the benefits and harms of different treatment strategies and interventions for health conditions on patient outcomes in real world settings (**Attachment 1**: Definitions of outcomes research, CER, and PCOR). Skills development will include exposure to relevant epidemiological, statistical, experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies, analysis of large data sets, health outcomes measurement, decision analysis and economic evaluation, all with an emphasis on the practical application of outcomes research methodology.

Benefits of the Program:

<u>Protected Time for Mentored Research Training.</u> Annual NRSA stipend for full-time multidisciplinary mentored research training. Multidisciplinary mentored research training is the backbone of this training program and fundamental to successful career development in health services, outcomes and effectiveness research. Trainees will be expected to propose a team of at least two experienced mentors within the first two months after selection. An excellent pool of primary mentors has been identified and these mentors are available to the program (**See COERE website for list**).

<u>Tuition Support for Didactic Training.</u> Degree and non-degree track training for HSOER through relevant MSPH programs (**Attachment 2**). Trainees are encouraged to enroll in courses to address specific training goals tailored to their background, experience, career objectives and interests. Trainees without an existing MSPH or comparable degree will obtain an MSPH through one of the approved programs/tracks. Trainees with an existing MSPH or comparable degree will be encouraged to consider courses within these programs to supplement core skills and learn new methodologies.

<u>Training Related Expenses (TREs).</u> Health insurance, travel stipend, and possibility of additional funds for training related expenses.

Short-Term Practicum Experiences. Innovative rotations with internal and off-site experts and organizations (**Attachment 3:** Examples of potential rotation partners). Additional offsite training opportunities and practicum experiences may be explored and proposed by the T32 applicant.

II. <u>ELIGIBILITY</u>

Candidates must be U.S. citizens, non-citizen nationals, or have permanent residency status. Eligible applicants will be enrolled in a clinical or research doctorate program, including PhD, ScD, DrPH, MD, DO, DC, ND, DDS, DMD, DNS, PharmD or equivalent doctoral degree. Candidates must demonstrate a commitment to mentored research training and career development in health services, outcomes and effectiveness research.

III. <u>APPLICATION PROCESS</u>

Please follow the application instructions described below. The attachments referenced above are designed to assist you in drafting your application.

1) **Letter of Interest (LOI).** Please include a 1-2 page letter of interest addressing the following:

A) Discuss your interest in training in outcomes and effectiveness research at this time in your career development and summarize any relevant background and previous training. If you have already identified a <u>specific research focus or project</u> that you wish to pursue during your fellowship, please discuss.

B) Briefly discuss your goals for research training and career development, <u>including coursework or degree attainment</u>. If you have already attained an MPH/ MSPH or doctoral degree in a relevant discipline, please discuss additional competencies (e.g., certain advanced methodological skills) you would be interested in attaining during your fellowship.

C) Please review the list of current practicum rotation partners (**Attachment 3**) and <u>propose a rotation</u> that might be of interest to you if you feel it would be advantageous to you. A practicum experience is optional. Trainees are not restricted to the current portfolio of rotation partners; therefore, if none of these practicum experiences seem compatible with your career development goals and objectives please consider proposing an experience that you would be interested in trying to arrange.

D) T32 Applicants do not have to have a primary mentor pre-identified to apply; however, please review the list of our primary HSOER mentoring pool (**See COERE website for list**) and <u>propose one or more mentor(s) that you would like the opportunity to work with</u>. If you have already identified a primary mentor in your content area, please discuss.

2) **Curriculum Vitae (CV).**

3) **Letters of recommendation.** Please provide 1-2 letters of recommendation. Ideally, these should be from faculty you have worked with directly on research or research training-related activities or who have supervised you in your graduate training. Faculty providing letters of recommendation should be collected by the applicant who will include them in the application packet.

IV. <u>IMPORTANT DATES</u>

January 17, 2020, 5:00 PM CST – Last day for receipt of applications.

Early April – Anticipated timeline for notification to candidates of selection outcome.

July 1, 2020 – Fellowship start date.

V. <u>SUBMISSION OF MATERIALS</u>

1) Interested applicants will upload their application as **a single PDF document** to:
   https://www.uab.edu/medicine/coere/education/t32-fellowship-in-outcomes-and-effectiveness-research-and-health-services-research. Please combine in the following order:

   A) 1-2 page Letter of Interest (LOI)

   B) Curriculum Vitae (CV)

   C) Letters of Recommendation

Contacts: Letters of interest and of recommendation should be addressed to:

Kenneth G. Saag, MD, MSc, Jane Knight Lowe Professor of Medicine, Program Director
UAB Center for Outcomes and Effectiveness Research and Education
FOT 820
1720 2nd Ave South
Birmingham, AL 35294-4410

For questions about the application process or the training program, **please contact Jeanne Merchant, Program Manager, at jsmerchant@uabmc.edu or 205-996-9672.**

ATTACHMENT 1

DEFINITIONS:

OUTCOMES RESEARCH

COMPARATIVE EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH (CER)

PATIENT CENTERED OUTCOMES RESEARCH (PCOR)

Definitions of Outcomes Research, Comparative Effectiveness Research, and Patient Centered Outcomes Research

What is Outcomes Research?

Excerpt from the Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research (AHRQ) Fact Sheet – Outcomes research seeks to understand the end results of particular health care practices and interventions. End results include effects that people experience and care about, such as change in the ability to function. In particular, for individuals with chronic conditions—where cure is not always possible—end results include quality of life as well as mortality. By linking the care people get to the outcomes they experience, outcomes research has become the key to developing better ways to monitor and improve the quality of care. Supporting improvements in health outcomes is a strategic goal of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ, formerly the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research).

Outcomes Research. Fact Sheet. AHRQ Publication No. 00-P011, March 2000. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/outfact.htm

What is Comparative Effectiveness Research?

Department of Health and Human Services Definition – HHS Comparative effectiveness research is the conduct and synthesis of research comparing the benefits and harms of different interventions and strategies to prevent, diagnose, treat and monitor health conditions in "real world" settings. The purpose of this research is to improve health outcomes by developing and disseminating evidence-based information to patients, clinicians, and other decision-makers, responding to their expressed needs, about which interventions are most effective for which patients under specific circumstances.

• To provide this information, CER must access a comprehensive array of health-related outcomes for diverse patient populations and sub-groups.

• Defined interventions compared may include medications, procedures, medical and assistive devices and technologies, diagnostic testing, behavioral change, and delivery system strategies.

• This research necessitates the development, expansion, and use of a variety of data sources and methods to access comparative effectiveness and actively disseminate the results.

What is Patient-Centered Outcomes Research?

Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute Working Definition – Patient-Centered Outcomes Research (PCOR) helps people make informed health care decisions and allows their voice to be heard in assessing the value of health care options.

This research answers patient-focused questions:

1. "Given my personal characteristics, conditions and preferences, what should I expect will happen to me?"

2. "What are my options and what are the potential benefits and harms of those options?"

3. "What can I do to improve the outcomes that are most important to me?"

4. "How can clinicians and the care delivery systems they work in help me make the best decisions about my health and healthcare?"

To answer these questions, PCOR:

- Assesses the benefits and harms of preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, palliative, or health delivery system interventions to inform decision making, highlighting comparisons and outcomes that matter to people;

- Is inclusive of an individual's preferences, autonomy and needs, focusing on outcomes that people notice and care about such as survival, function, symptoms, and health related quality of life;

- Incorporates a wide variety of settings and diversity of participants to address individual differences and barriers to implementation and dissemination; and

- Investigates (or may investigate) optimizing outcomes while addressing burden to individuals, availability of services, technology, and personnel, and other stakeholder perspectives.

For a more information on PCOR, go to the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) website at http://www.pcori.org/.

ATTACHMENT 2

MSPH DEGREE PROGRAMS

MSPH Tracks and Coursework Offerings through UAB School of Public Health

T32 trainees will have the opportunity to supplement their research training an Outcomes Research Master of Science in Public Health (MSPH) degree in the UAB School of Public Health relevant to HSOER. This program combines didactic research instruction and applied research experience in order to prepare students for further study toward the PhD or for research or specialized technical positions in government, industry, academia or private institutions.

All MSPH students complete a research project/thesis, take core courses in biostatistics (BST611, BST612, BST613) and epidemiology (EPI610), and complete a minimum of 15 hours of methodologic and specialty area courses. Students are strongly encouraged to enroll in other core public health courses. Individual MSPH programs require additional courses specific to the area of study. The degree track is described below.

MSPH IN OUTCOMES RESEARCH
The UAB SOPH has offered a master's program in outcomes research since 1996. The current curriculum leads to an MSPH in Outcomes Research concentrating in clinical decision-making and cost effectiveness. The program has served students interested in a terminal master's degree and those clinicians pursuing postdoctoral training, including those in our existing T32 traineeship program.

The 43 semester-hour curriculum has four components: 1) The school-wide MSPH core; 2) The outcomes core, consisting of a course in ethics (HCO670) and in health economics (HCO601), and five courses in outcomes research; 3) One or more electives from a broad list of statistics, epidemiology, survey design, policy, clinical trials and other options; and 4) Nine hours of master's project research, which typically culminates in an article submitted for publication or a grant proposal.

ATTACHMENT 3

LOCAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE SHORT-TERM ROTATION OPPORTUNITIES
"MINI-SABBATICALS"

Short-Term Rotation Opportunities (optional)

"Mini-sabbaticals" are short-term rotation opportunities designed to complement training experiences offered at UAB and allow a trainee to acquire competencies in specific areas of research tailored to their individual training needs.

The Center for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS) helped create a resource of identified mini-sabbatical opportunities: https://clic-ctsa.org/opportunities_board/sequin.

If you are interested in a mini-sabbatical short-term training as part of your T32 experience, please contact Jeanne Merchant (jsmerchant@uabmc.edu) or Jeff Foster (pjfoster@uabmc.edu) for more information. We can help you identify opportunities that match your interests and needs if you don't see one that is appropriate on the website.