

Training Future Leaders: Social Emergency Medicine Fellowships

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Since 2008, social emergency medicine has become recognized in its own right as a niche within the field of emergency medicine (EM). One key way that social EM leaders have cultivated the evolution of their field has been through post-graduate fellowship programs to train a new generation of leaders and to facilitate research. Since the first social EM fellowship program was started by Dr. Harrison Alter at Highland Hospital in Oakland, California in 2010, many institutions have followed. In the 2021 fellowship application cycle, there are at least 10 options for senior residents interested in pursuing post-graduate training in social EM (Table).

Social EM fellowships focus on studying the ways that an individual’s life outside of their physiological health impacts their ED presentation and then using that knowledge to improve care. Fellows become interested in the field for a variety of reasons and the path to social EM fellowship is flexible and varied. Some fellows became involved in community or public health prior to medical school, while others developed an interest during their training. Some residency programs such as Stanford University, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Illinois in Chicago allow protected time for residents to receive training in social EM during their early post-graduate education, which has sparked interest in fellowship.

Dr. Victor Cisneros, a fellow at the University of California - Irvine (UCI), recalls his own interest in social EM beginning during his medical school years, even before the term was coined. As a medical student, MPH student, and later emergency medicine resident at UCI, he has studied ways the ED can screen patients for food insecurity. “By the time I was considering fellowships, I knew there were many amazing programs out there, but I had already done so much work in Orange County and I was watching my projects blossom, so I really wanted to stay to see them through. UCI at the time didn’t have an official social EM program, but I thought - why not make one?” With guidance from his mentors, Dr. Cisneros was able to create a social EM track within the Research Fellowship in Population Health at UCI. His work has involved collaborating with a non-profit organization to screen for food insecurity. “What I have been doing this past year is creating a curriculum at UCI for future fellows and further developing and expanding my research projects and methodology at UCI with food insecurity, working with our local children’s hospital, and developing Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) curriculum for medical students and residents,” he states. At UCI, a comprehensive food insecurity screening survey is given to every child that enters the pediatric ED. Individuals with a positive screen are connected with social work and/or appropriate resources to address their food insecurity. By screening every patient, this helps normalize discussions between providers and patients surrounding food insecurity and prevents the perception of singling someone out based on their appearance. This model could be adapted to address other public health interventions such as screening for housing insecurity, intimate partner violence, or substance use disorders.

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Dr. Cisneros emphasizes that the principles of social emergency medicine are important for all practicing doctors: “Every physician should be considering social determinants of health (SDOH),” he says. “Data shows that SDOH account for 80% of patient outcomes regarding quality of life and life expectancy, so, why wouldn’t we be considering it?” Practically, he believes physicians can incorporate SDOH into their history and physical in under 30 seconds: “When you’re doing your abdominal exam, one or two questions about whether the patient has enough food to eat at home or enough money to afford their medications can go a long way.”

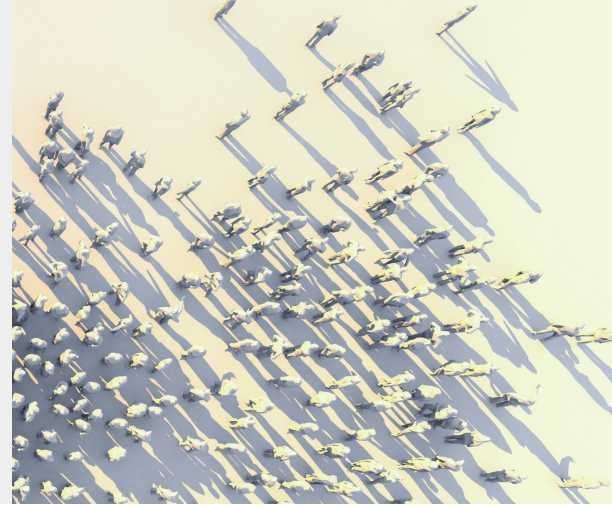
The fellowship programs currently available vary in length, prerequisites, and areas of focus. Some prefer applicants who have completed a PGY-4 year or gained an additional year of experience after a 3-year residency. As of now, applicants apply directly to each program. Most require a CV and letters of recommendation. Application deadlines vary and many are rolling, with the soonest being July 15th for the National Clinician Scholars Program. Many fellowships offer fellows the opportunity to obtain an additional graduate degree such as a Master’s of Public Health. Some programs are EM-specific, while others train fellows from a variety of



Table. Social Emergency Medicine and Related Fellowship Programs

Institution	Program Name	Length (years)	Degree Conferred	Website
Stanford University	Social Emergency Medicine Fellowship	2	MPH or Masters of Health Sciences Research	emed.stanford.edu/fellowships/mph
University of California--Los Angeles	International and Domestic Health Equity and Leadership (IDHEAL)	2	MPH or MS in Health Policy and Management	www.idheal-ucla.org
University of California--Irvine	Research Fellowship in Population Health	2	MPH option	www.emergencymed.uci.edu/Education/research_fellowship.asp
Harvard	The Commonwealth Fund Fellowship in Minority Health Policy	1	MPH or MPA	cff.hms.harvard.edu
St Barnabas Medical Center Bronx, New York (SUNY Affiliate)	Health Fellowship in Social Emergency Medicine	1	None	www.sbhny.org/EMResidency/fellowship-in-social-emergency-medicine/
University of Wisconsin--Madison	Wisconsin Population Health Service Fellowship	2	None	wiphfellowship.org
University of Iowa	Social Medicine Associate Scholar Program	2 years Or 1 year if related Master's degree/experience	MPH	medicine.uiowa.edu/emergencymedicine/education/associate-scholar-program/associate-scholar-program-info
University of Alabama at Birmingham	Social EM and Population Health Fellowship	1-2	MSPH or MPH	www.uab.edu/medicine/em/education/fellowships/social-em-link
Integrative Emergency Services/ John Peter Smith Hospital (Dallas, TX)	Street Medicine Fellowship	1	None	ies.healthcare/careers/street-medicine-fellowship/
University of Massachusetts	Health Equity Fellowship	2	MPH or MS in Clinical Investigation	www.umassmed.edu/emed/fellowship/internationalem/
Duke UCLA UCSF University of Michigan UPenn Yale	National Clinicians Scholars Program	2	Master's degree option (site dependent)	nationalcsp.org





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backgrounds. For most physicians interested in pursuing social EM fellowship, it is important to be involved in research and leadership projects and to network with various programs around the country to find a good fit. For others, like Dr. Cisneros, there may be an untapped opportunity in one’s own institution.

As this field grows, it holds great promise for the improvement of health care delivery to the most vulnerable members of our communities. Social EM represents the specialty’s devotion to providing high quality, accessible care to each and every individual who walks through the doors of an emergency department. Yet, it represents much more—it signifies the recognition that improving health care delivery requires devoting time, energy and resources to better understanding the systemic barriers that patients face, so that emergency physicians can implement appropriate ED-based interventions and advocate at local, national and even international platforms in the interests of their patients and communities.

Do you know of a post-graduate opportunity that isn’t on this list? Please let us know. Email: info@aaem.org. Interested in joining the AAEM Social EM & Population Health Committee? Email: info@aaem.org. ●

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