

## VASCULITIS CLINICAL RESEARCH CONSORTIUM–VASCULITIS FOUNDATION VASCULITIS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

### **Summary:**

The Vasculitis Clinical Research Consortium (VCRC)-Vasculitis Foundation (VF) Fellowship is a mentored training program of up to two years for physician-investigators who have indicated a commitment to vasculitis and wish to pursue a period of specialized training with an emphasis on clinical and/or translational patient-oriented clinical investigation. The trainee will undertake the Fellowship at a VCRC-affiliated site in North America that has an established distinct clinical and research program in vasculitis and availability of senior faculty mentors. There is no core curriculum for the VCRC-VF Fellowship. Fellowships are tailored to the individual Fellow, depending on the fellow's interests, background, and type of Fellowship (a one-year clinical Fellowship, or a two-year research/clinical Fellowship), and the unique resources and opportunities at the host institution. Being named a VCRC-VF Fellow is neither dependent on, nor a guarantee of, funding support for the Fellow by the VCRC-VF.

### **Goals:**

There are two principal goals of the VCRC-VF Fellowship:

1. For the Fellow to be involved in the care of enough patients with various forms of vasculitis to develop experience and expertise in the diagnosis and management of patients.
2. To familiarize trainees with the major unmet research needs in vasculitis, the investigative techniques used in clinical and translational research in vasculitis, and understand how to conduct high-quality clinical research in vasculitis

There are several tracks available for VCRC-VF Fellows:

1. Research/clinical fellow for two years that includes a minimum of two half-days per week in a vasculitis clinic over two years, combined with a research project(s) under the guidance of a mentor. Preference given to those with a specific plan for didactic training, which may include completion of a post-graduate degree (Master's or PhD) or research certification program.
  2. Clinical fellow for one year which includes three to four half-days/week of clinical training in vasculitis and some didactic curriculum at a sponsoring institution to assist in carrying out research. A research/academic project is expected to be completed in this time frame.
  3. Other. Occasionally, a VCRC-VF Fellowship may involve a time course and/or structure different from above to accommodate unique circumstances. A detailed description of any such alternative approaches must be included in the Fellowship application.
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**Eligibility:**

The eligibility criteria for the VCRC-VF Fellowship are as follows:

1. The candidate must be an MD (or equivalent) committed to a career in caring for patients with vasculitis.
2. The candidate needs to have a strong interest in conducting clinical investigation in vasculitis.
3. The candidate must have finished a residency and (preferably) have some sub-specialty training relevant to vasculitis (e.g. rheumatology, nephrology, or other disciplines). Candidates from various subspecialty backgrounds are encouraged to apply. If specializing, VCRC Fellowship training will take place after the applicant has completed their subspecialty training.
4. The candidate must have a training license or full license to practice in the state/province where the Fellowship will take place from the START of the Fellowship period.
5. The fellow must be a citizen of the host country or have a valid visa that is acceptable to the host site from the START of the Fellowship period.

**Requirements of the Host Institution:**

1. The sponsoring institution and VCRC mentor must guarantee that the candidate will devote nearly 100% of his/her time to the Fellowship, including all research and clinical experiences. Fellows should ideally not be assigned to substantial non-vasculitis-related clinical duties and be freed of administrative duties.
  2. The sponsoring institution must take responsibility for ensuring the Fellow is paid his or her full salary and benefits. The sources of salary may include some combination of funds from the host institution, from the Fellow's "home" institution, from various grants, and/or funds from the VCRC-VF Fellowship itself. VCRC-VF funds are dependent on availability of funds and priorities set by the VCRC-VF.
  3. The sponsoring institution will assume all costs and conduct the work required for the Fellow to obtain a valid visa (if needed) and appropriate medical license.
  4. The sponsoring institution will follow all relevant regulatory requirements of receiving US federal funds and funds from the Vasculitis Foundation.
  5. The sponsoring institution must recognize that any funding provided by the VCRC-VF will only be provided if the Fellow has the legal and local regulatory requirements in place to both see patients and conduct human subject research at the START of the Fellowship and the sponsoring institution will be at risk of providing all costs of the Fellowship (or a portion thereof) if this requirement is not met.
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**Expectations of Awardees:**

1. VCRC-VF Fellows are expected to devote nearly 100% of his/her professional time on Fellowship-related activities.
2. VCRC-VF Fellows will comply with all requirements and guidelines as outlined in this document as well as additional reasonable stipulations or requests from the VCRC Steering Committee.
3. VCRC-VF Fellows will be expected to become familiar with the Vasculitis Foundation and its purpose. Fellows are expected to take part in activities of the Vasculitis Foundation and Vasculitis Patient-Powered Research Network, including participation in symposia, webinars, newsletters, etc.
4. VCRC-VF Fellow awardees may be asked to present progress reports on their work semi-annually to the VCRC Steering Committee.
5. VCRC-VF Fellows are expected to present abstracts to the American College of Rheumatology or/and other appropriate specialty meetings.
6. All Publications resulting from the Fellows' work will acknowledge the VCRC-VF fellowship appropriately.
7. A written progress report is required to be submitted by the Fellow semi-annually to the VCRC Steering Committee that will include i) a two-page summary of the progress made by the Fellows (written by the Fellow) and ii) a one-page evaluation of the Fellow by VCRC-VF Fellowship mentor.
8. VCRC-VF Fellows will provide updates on their careers to the VCRC, upon request, for at least 10 years following completion of the Fellowship and will ensure the VCRC has active and accurate contact information for the Fellows at all times.

**Responsibilities of Mentors:**

1. Mentors will assume responsibility for overseeing and completing all administrative aspects of the Fellowship, both at their host institution and with the VCRC-VF.
  2. Mentors will assume responsibility for the quality and ethical conduct of the awardees' work. Mentors will meet with awardees at least twice per month for informal discussions of progress and are encouraged to meet more often. Mentors and Fellows will meet semi-annually (prior to the awardee's presentation before the VCRC Steering Committee) for a formal evaluation of the previous year's work. Updates will be presented to the VCRC Steering Committee twice a year.
  3. It is anticipated that the mentor will guide the awardee carefully in the design and conduct of not only the sponsored research project, but also in other decision-making appropriate to the stage of the awardee's career.
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**Selection Criteria:**

VCRC-VF Fellows are selected by the VCRC Steering Committee, comprised of the Principal Investigators from primary VCRC sites, with input and review by the VF. Selection criteria for the Fellowship includes first and foremost the demonstration of the aptitude, ability, and prior training necessary for first-rate clinical training in vasculitis and conduct of clinical research. The Committee will assess the candidates' commitment to an academic clinical research career along with his or her interests and potential for clinical research. The successful applicant should have strong clinical skills and be regarded as having the potential to direct a referral center for vasculitis. Prior research background, academic honors, scholarly achievements, and the letters of the mentor and Chief/Chairman will all be considered in choosing among promising candidates. The appropriateness and value of the proposed clinical, research, and educational curricula, and how these plans fit with the applicant's goals will also be assessed. Candidates will be selected through a process of consensus. For candidates who plan a 2-year training program, Year 2 enrollment and funding will be contingent upon successful completion of Year 1.

Preference will be given to i) applicants interested in completing two years (unless already satisfying some of the requirements); ii) applicants who intend to earn (or have already received) a post-graduate degree relevant to clinical research; and iii) applicants who can demonstrate an intention to practice in an "underserved" geographic areas, i.e., one that does not have vasculitis expertise at an academic center.

Additional preference will be given to candidates who propose research related to VCRC and/or Vasculitis Patient-Powered Research Network (VPPRN) projects and/or extensive resources and data of the VCRC/VPPRN. New projects that capitalize on VCRC/VPPRN resources or augment areas of VCRC emphasis are also acceptable.

**VCRC-VF Application Process:**

There are two pathways for the VCRC-VF Fellowship application:

**Option 1:** You have identified a VCRC mentor, and sponsoring institution. Please complete the Fellowship application as outlined below.

**Option 2:** You have not identified a VCRC mentor or sponsoring institution. Please submit your CV and a letter stating your interest in a VCRC-VF Fellowship, including any and all ideas for the nature and structure of your Fellowship, funding options, geographic preferences, and any other information you feel would be helpful for the VCRC-VF to know to help advance your application. These documents will be reviewed and potential centers and mentors contacted. If an appropriate mentor and host institution is identified, then submission of a full Fellowship application will be required.

The application consists of the following (to be submitted as a single PDF with the documents arranged in the following order):

1. VCRC-VF Fellowship Application Form
  - a. Simple, preferably one-page form with basic information, including:
    - i. Applicants full name, professional address, institution email, telephone number
    - ii. Proposed VCRC site mentor: name, email address, telephone number
    - iii. Primary proposed research mentor (if different from VCRC site mentor): name, email address, telephone number
    - iv. Proposed dates of Fellowship
    - v. Anticipated date of IRB/Ethical approval of proposed project
    - vi. Status of needed (if any) visa for proposed Fellowship
      1. Needed?
      2. Proposed application date
      3. Proposed approval date
    - vii. Status of additional needed (if any) medical licensing for proposed Fellowship
      1. Obtained/in place vs. needed
      2. Proposed application date
      3. Proposed approval date
2. Candidate's CV including abstracts and presentations separate from publications; manuscripts in preparation may be listed if clearly so identified; all grants should be listed; list of current research/academic projects.
3. Candidate's summary of proposed research project, didactic curriculum, clinical activities, timeline of activities, and statement of goals/career objectives. This is all in one document not to exceed three single-spaced pages.
4. A letter from the sponsoring Mentor which includes recommendation for candidate (both regarding research and clinical skills), mentoring record, and details of site regarding vasculitis and overall academic and clinical resources. If the sponsoring mentor is different from the expected day-to-day primary mentor then the duties for each mentor should be outlined and both mentors must sign the letter. Not to exceed two pages.
5. Letter by the Chief or Chairperson of the VCRC target site Division/Section or Department that clearly guarantees institutional financial support as outlined above, institutional commitment to comply with all VCRC-VF Fellowship stipulations and provide financial/contractual oversight for the receipt of VCRC-VF funds. Not to exceed one page.

Applications for the VCRC-VF Fellowship are accepted at any time of the year but it is expected that Fellowships will usually commence in alignment with the academic calendar in North America (academic years start on July 1). Alternative schedules are acceptable. Applications and recommendations for admission will be screened by the Steering Committee. Qualified candidates may be invited to visit the program for interviews and the Steering Committee may request additional information from the applicant or sponsoring site. The timing of reviews may vary based on the work of the Steering Committee and other issues affecting funding of the Fellowship and activities of the VCRC-VF.

**For additional information, please contact both of the following individuals:**

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