

Clinical Fellowship in Huntington Disease Research at UBC



- Grade:** Clinical Research Fellow
- Accountable to:** **Dr Blair R. Leavitt MD, CM FRCPC (Neurology)**
Professor, Department of Medical Genetics and
Division of Neurology, Department of Medicine (Associate)
Director of Research, Centre for Huntington Disease
Scientist, The Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics
The University of British Columbia
950 West 28th Avenue, Rm. 2020
Vancouver, British Columbia
CANADA V5Z4H4
- Duration:** Two years, with potential starting date of March 1st 2018
- Working relationships:** All members of the HD clinical research team at UBC Hospital, including Neurologists, Psychiatrists, Geneticists, Genetic Counsellors, Psychologists, Radiologists, Social workers, Research coordinators, other administrative and support staff.

Background of the project

Huntington disease (HD) is a hereditary neurodegenerative condition. It usually develops in adulthood (typically between 30 and 50 years old) and can cause a very wide range of symptoms. Manifestations may include motor dysfunction (chorea and loss of voluntary movements), cognitive decline (impaired concentration, memory and attention problems) and psychiatric symptoms (e.g. depression, irritability, anxiety). The Centre for Huntington Disease (CHD) at the University of British Columbia Hospital in Vancouver BC Canada, offers expert multi-disciplinary care to individuals and families affected by HD. In addition, the CHD provides an opportunity to become involved in cutting-edge research, including clinical trials of potential new therapies for HD. The hope of all our research efforts is to improve our understanding of HD, advance the management of HD symptoms, and ultimately to find a cure for this devastating disorder.

Overview of the Post

A funded *Clinical Research Fellowship* is available for a medical graduate with an interest in neurology, medical genetics, or psychiatry to work under the direction of Dr. Blair R. Leavitt at the Centre for Huntington Disease, based in the Department of Medical Genetics and the Division of Neurology, Department of Medicine at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada.

The work will be in the field of Huntington's disease, which is an inherited neurodegenerative disorder. The *Fellow* will participate in a number of on-going and up-coming experimental therapeutic trials and clinical translational projects, and this post is suitable for those seeking a career in HD clinical care, clinical neuroscience, and drug development. The working environment is collective and multidisciplinary. Enthusiasm, ability to be self-organised, an enquiring mind, vision and good clinical skills will all be necessary. The candidate will need to have good computer skills and be able to pick up mathematical statistical concepts.

The *Clinical Research Fellow* will be closely involved with the Centre for Huntington Disease at UBC under the clinical supervision of Dr. Blair R. Leavitt. This is an award-winning clinic that cares for patients and families affected by Huntington's disease from premanifest gene carriers through to patients with

advanced disease. Dr. Blair R. Leavitt is one of two Consultant Neurologists at the clinic other current staff include two Consultant Psychiatrists, a Consultant Clinical Geneticist, a Genetic Counsellor, two Clinical Trial Coordinators, a Clinic Administrator, and a Social Worker supported by the Huntington Society of Canada. This Clinic receives referrals from all over the province of British Columbia, the Yukon, and Pacific North-Western U.S. and is one of the largest HD clinics in North America, caring for approximately 750 HD patients and many more at risk of the disease.

The *Clinical Fellow* will be centrally involved in the conduct of HD clinical trials: including, but not limited to, innovative intrathecal huntingtin-lowering therapy studies, Cerebrospinal Fluid (CSF) Biomarker studies, trials of novel biologic therapies, and large international observational trials in HD. He/she will work closely with the other CHD team members (Research Trial Coordinators, Research Assistants, and Project Administrator) as well as other members of the CHD team. In addition to the training in Huntington's disease, the candidate will receive clinical training in Clinical Neurogenetics with Dr Blair R. Leavitt. The *Clinical Research Fellow* will be responsible for biosample collection that will take place in these studies, and must have established skills with blood collection and lumbar puncture for CSF collection. **Intrathecal administration of novel forms of huntingtin-lowering agents will be an important responsibility of the Clinical Research fellow, and demonstrated experience and proficiency with lumbar punctures is an absolute requirement for this position.**

The *Clinical Research Fellow* will also obtain informed consent and carry out clinical assessment (medical interview, neurological and oculomotor examination and psychiatric assessment), blood sample collection, and sample processing. The *Clinical Research Fellow* will be responsible for identifying and acting appropriately on any clinical issues arising in these studies, in accordance with Good Clinical Practice requirements. The *Clinical Research Fellow* will also have the opportunity to become involved in other ongoing research and clinical studies at the CMMT and around UBC.

Responsibilities

Clinical and research

- To assist in patient recruitment and retention.
- To complete formal trial-specific training and evaluation in assessment of subjects.
- To assess patients and handle biomarker samples in a rigorous and reproducible fashion as outlined above.
- To ensure that the highest quality data is collected.
- To assist with outpatient HD clinical care as required.
- To perform statistical analysis of research data, manuscript preparation and submission.
- To undertake additional research tasks and projects including collaboration with researchers from other centres.

Communication

- Maintaining appropriate channels and styles of communication to meet the needs of patients, relatives and carers, managers, peers and other professionals / agencies.
- Maintaining mechanisms to support patient involvement and feedback.

Management

- To ensure the highest standard of record keeping, maintaining accurate and appropriate patient records, including the strict confidentiality of all records.
- To attend departmental and other meetings as appropriate.

Professional

- To act at all times in accordance with the highest professional standards, and to ensure that these are maintained in the delivery of all aspects of patient care.
- To ensure that he/she is covered, at all times, by appropriate medical indemnity.

General

- As duties and responsibilities change, the job description will be reviewed and amended in consultation with the post-holder.
- The post-holder will carry out any other duties as are within the scope, spirit and purpose of the job as requested by the Principle Investigator (Dr. Leavitt).
- The post-holder will actively follow appropriate UBC guidelines and regulations.
- The post-holder will maintain an awareness and observation of Fire and Health & Safety Regulations.

REQUIREMENTS:

Essential Criteria

- Registered medical practitioner in British Columbia, Canada (or eligible)
- MRCPC or equivalent postgraduate qualification preferred
- Experience in an accredited Residency program at appropriate level
- Be able to demonstrate a record of academic excellence
- Excellent inter-personal and communication skills
- Excellent organisational skills
- Able to work co-operatively in a team environment
- A very high level of consideration and care for patients and research subjects
- Interested in research and a commitment to quality in the research process
- Good clinical assessment skills
- **Established proficiency with lumbar puncture is REQUIRED.**

Desirable Criteria

- Enthusiasm
- Ability to be self-organised
- Initiative, and an enquiring mind
- Experience in statistical analysis
- Experience of peer-reviewed publication of research
- Excellent oral and written presentation skills
- Knowledge of clinical research regulatory requirements, ethics and governance

Appointment:

The post is funded for one year in the first instance, and renewable on an annual basis (subject to successful performance review) for a total of two years. The post-holder will be subject to a nine-month probationary period. SALARY RANGE: up to \$100,000 per annum. Annual Leave: 14 days per annum.

Applications (1 copy of CV and the names of 3 references) should be sent to:

Blair R. Leavitt MDCM, FRCPC (Neurology)
Professor, Department of Medical Genetics, and
Division of Neurology, Department of Medicine (Associate)
Director of Research, Centre for Huntington Disease
Scientist, The Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics
Child and Family Research Institute, BC Children's Hospital
The University of British Columbia
950 West 28th Avenue, Rm. 2020

EMAIL: bleavitt@cmmt.ubc.ca