

Postdoctoral Scholar in Community Outreach and Engagement at a National Cancer Institute (NCI)-Designated Cancer Center

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1. Background

Faculty and staff at The University of Kansas Cancer Center (KUCC) identified a need for a post-doctoral scholar (post-doc) within Community Outreach and Engagement (COE). The post-doc started in the fall of 2024 and has participated in a full-time regimen of advanced research training, collaborated on and led independent research projects, published projects and findings, prepared grants, and participated in relevant activities in preparation for a career in research and academia.

2. Goals

The primary tasks are assessing cancer-related needs of the KUCC catchment area (CA), which is the State of Kansas (KS) and Western Missouri (MO); assessing disparities in cancer-related needs; identifying opportunities for evidence-based interventions to reduce the cancer burden; evaluating COE efforts; analyzing and publishing data on the identified cancer-related needs; identifying opportunities for and implementing evidence-based interventions to reduce the cancer burden and needs; and identifying innovative ways to engage researchers and the community.

3. Solutions and Methods

- A key requirement of the NCI Cancer Center Support Grant (CCSG) is to describe our center's CA cancer-related health needs, including geographic, demographic, and health characteristics; the post-doc is leading the third such effort both locally and regionally
- The post-doc is fostering collaborations between KUCC researchers and the Veteran's Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), both in Kansas City and nationally
- The post-doc is evaluating program data for COE

4. Outcomes

In preparation for the third CA assessment, the post-doc developed a conceptual model to systematically guide current and future assessments. The post-doc engaged our CA steering committee and discussed priorities for the assessment. The committee represents community advisory board (CAB) members, COE, and all three KUCC cancer programs. The committee compared previous assessments, CAB and KUCC priorities, CCSG mandates, and state (KS and MO) cancer plans.

In addition, the post-doc is leading a regional effort to produce a proposed set of standardized measures for CA assessments nationwide. These measures are based on validated data collection tools and represent domains identified in the literature. This initiative grew out of the Midwest Data Partners Conference in February 2025, which the postdoc helped organize. The states represented include Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, and Arkansas.

The post-doc is leading efforts to produce knowledge related to lung cancer screening and best methods for increasing screening rates using large, nationally representative data within the VAMC and the Epic Cosmos Data Platform.

Category: Catchment Area Data, Social Determinants of Health, and Equity – Work in Progress – Student/Trainee

They also evaluated program data for COE programs including tobacco cessation texting, health fair screenings, the annual report, and our patient engagement program.

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

The post-doc role fills a critical need in the KUCC mission by identifying cancer-related health needs and engaging the community and researchers with bi-directional communication. The post-doc will lead efforts to drive continued improvement of KUCC activities. A future goal is to implement system-level changes based on identified challenges.