

CRVS analyses and evaluations

CRVS Fellowship survey results from two cohorts: September 2019 and February 2020

Background

These survey data were obtained from a survey sent to 11 past Fellows – seven from a Sept-Nov 2019 cohort, and four from another Feb-March 2020 cohort. Survey findings from these two cohorts are presented and compared against findings from a 2019 evaluation of 23 past Fellowship recipients. Available at: <https://crvsgateway.info/file/17729/3673>

There are some differences in the characteristics of the two cohorts that should be kept in mind when interpreting the results. The two most recent cohorts (Sept-Nov 2019 and Feb-March 2020) had shorter Fellowships (six weeks) compared to their previous counterparts (three months) which may have impacted the recent Fellows' perceptions of the program. Moreover, all Fellows in the two recent cohorts arrived and departed Melbourne on the same dates as each other (or approximately the same dates), compared to earlier Fellows who arrived and departed Melbourne at different dates. Finally, comparison of the results for these 11 most recent respondents to the earlier Fellows should be taken with care, as the sample sizes are all relatively small, making it possible for a single outlier result to skew the overall average.

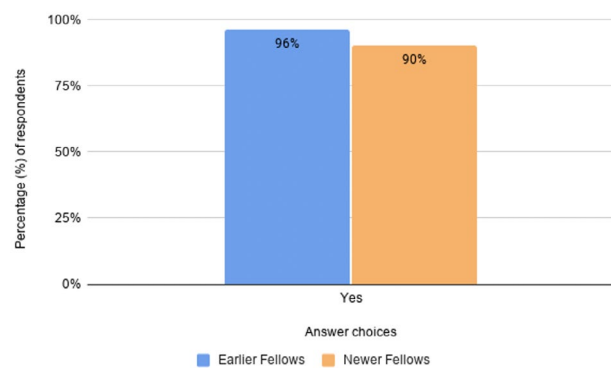
Part I: Fellowship experiences

Overall experience

All 11 respondents (100 per cent) reported receiving adequate support from the University of Melbourne team prior to arriving in Melbourne. As shown in **Figure 1**, 90 per cent of the newer Fellows (from the two most recent cohorts) felt that the Fellowship met their expectations, compared to 96 per cent of earlier Fellows from the first evaluation; however, the overall average rating increased from 4.52 to 4.6 (out of five) between the first and second evaluations.

Both sets of respondents cited collaboration and mentorship with their assigned supervisors as a key benefit of the program – however this was greater among the earlier Fellows (43 per cent) than the newer Fellows (18 per cent). Learning technical skills (like how to use ANACONDA) was mentioned by 45 per cent of the newer Fellows serving as a commonly cited benefit by these two newer cohorts. Among the newer Fellows, other positive aspects reported were collaboration and mentoring with assigned supervisors and other staff (18 per cent), networking with other Fellows (18 per cent), and the CRVS Bootcamp (nine per cent).

Figure 1: Responses to survey question, 'Did your Fellowship experience meet your expectations?', where blue columns represent responses by newer Fellows, and orange columns represent responses by the earlier Fellows.



Whilst 96 per cent of earlier Fellows reported that they would recommend the program to their colleagues, this increased to 100 per cent of newer Fellows. Respondents stated that the program would prove useful to colleagues seeking to learn not only about how to improve their own countries' CRVS systems, but also to learn strategies for improvement from other Fellows. One of the newer Fellows emphasised the importance of the program for low- and middle-income countries seeking to build capacity for CRVS-improvement, and another stated:

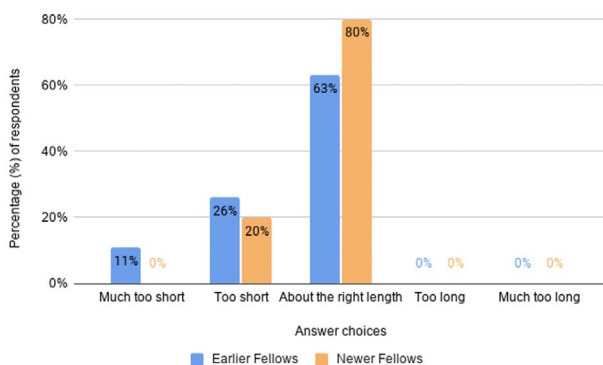
'I can list several reasons for recommending the program: From the moment of preparing the trip, I noticed the excellence in the reception provided by the program – everything was very organised; I believe that the excellence in the support of analysis and work coordination was high; all the work was carried out to produce a quality report with the possibility of publishing it in an academic journal; and finally, the opportunity to improve language skills and learn about the culture of another country.'

Duration of the Fellowship

As **Figure 2** shows, 63 per cent of the earlier Fellows felt that the Fellowship was about the right length compared to 80 per cent of the newer Fellows. Newer Fellows who noted that the Fellowship was too short suggested that preliminary resources related to each Fellow's topic could be provided prior to the start of the Fellowship. Another of the newer Fellows noted that the time period of six weeks in Melbourne was too short to write a high-quality report,

and suggested a mechanism to continue mentorship and collaboration between interested Fellows and their supervisor and team after the Fellowship.

Figure 2: Responses to survey question, ‘How did you feel about the duration of your Fellowship?’



CRVS Bootcamp

Another strength of the Fellowship was the ability to share and learn about other countries’ CRVS experiences through the CRVS Bootcamp, with 90 per cent of the newer Fellows reporting the Bootcamp to be useful in describing CRVS systems. On the aspects of the Fellowship that they found most useful, one respondent said:

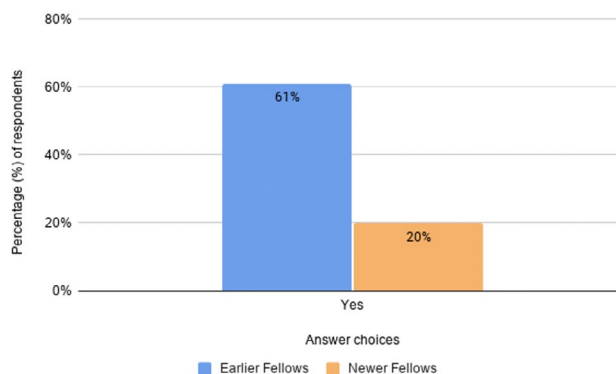
‘Learning from Fellows of different countries. The Bootcamp was very useful to learn concepts about CRVS systems.’

Most of the newer Fellows found that all aspects of the Fellowship were useful, although one respondent noted that the Bootcamp could potentially focus only on the specific themes related to the Fellows’ research topics, thus providing greater depth of content. Other topics could then be covered through printed materials, such as materials on journalism and communication.

Fellowship challenges

The proportion of respondents that experienced minor challenges throughout their Fellowship decreased significantly from the earlier evaluation to the most recent. 61 per cent of the earlier Fellows experienced one or more challenges during their Fellowship, compared to only 20 per cent of the newer Fellows as shown in **Figure 3**. The two newer Fellows that did report difficulties cited lack of access to literature for their research as well as language difficulties.

Figure 3: Responses to the question, ‘Did you experience any challenges whilst undertaking your Fellowship?’



Qualitative responses revealed that language issues and data identification/accessibility remained as the major issues for Fellows, however. Whilst 61 per cent of the earlier Fellows stated that language skills were not a challenge for them, this proportion increased to 80 per cent of newer Fellows, although none of these newer Fellows felt that language skills negatively impacted their Fellowship experiences.

The proportion of respondents who felt that they had received enough guidance on writing a Fellowship report or peer-reviewed paper increased from 91 per cent from the earlier Fellows to 100 per cent of newer Fellows. Two newer Fellows suggested that a hands-on training session (perhaps lasting two to three days) focusing on writing high-quality papers and reports would have been useful. Another stated that basic form-building, Excel, and Word skills were needed by some Fellows.

As for the difficulty with learning new technical skills, 35 per cent of earlier Fellows advised that the skills were either ‘easy’ or ‘somewhat easy’ to learn, a proportion which increased to 60 per cent of newer Fellows.

Gateway resources

All of the newer Fellows accessed resources on the CRVS Knowledge Gateway during their Fellowship, and all reported finding the Gateway to be useful. Suggestions for improvement included uploading recordings of Bootcamp sessions for Fellows to repeat on their own if needed, publishing of resources from other sources (e.g. links to more CRVS publications, including from sources like the GBD), additions of theoretical resources on CRVS, and greater promotion of the Fellowship program on the Gateway. All of the newer Fellows accessed the CRVS Knowledge Gateway after completing their Fellowships, and 90 per cent had recommended the Gateway to their colleagues or professional peers.

Part 2: Post-Fellowship experiences

CRVS networks

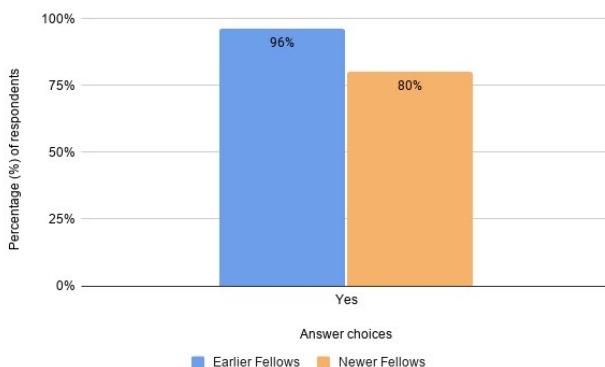
After the conclusion of the Fellowship, 91 per cent of earlier Fellows had received post-Fellowship support from their supervisor with 80 per cent stating that this support was ongoing (in the form of paper-writing, data analysis, and general technical support and guidance). 20 per cent of newer Fellows felt that further follow-up support would have been beneficial.

Networking benefits remained fairly constant from the earlier to newer Fellows, with 57 per cent of the earlier Fellows remaining in contact with other D4H staff (non-supervisors) and 61 per cent remaining in contact with other Fellows, compared to 70 per cent of newer Fellows maintaining contact with other Fellows and 60 per cent maintaining contact with other CRVS specialists at UoM.

Skills and knowledge transfer

Figure 4 illustrates that whilst 96 per cent of earlier Fellows had been able to apply new skills and knowledge to support CRVS activities in their workplace since returning home, 80 per cent of newer Fellows had been able to do the same. The majority of these newer Fellows discussed their new skills in their workplace and used these skills to improve the way they did their jobs, whilst others taught these new skills to a colleague or colleagues one-on-one or to a class or team of colleagues, trainees, or students.

Figure 4: Responses to question, 'Since completing your Fellowship, have you been able to apply new skills and knowledge to support CRVS activities in your home country?'



80 per cent of newer Fellows felt that the Fellowship had increased their confidence with colleagues in their workplace, 60 per cent found that it increased their ability to be an advocate for CRVS systems, and 70 per cent felt an increased desire to work within CRVS systems over the medium- to long-term.

Newer Fellows also noted that some of their new skills and knowledge learned had been institutionalised or used to improve CRVS functions in their workplace – one Fellow reported the institutionalisation of ANACONDA to check the quality of coded deaths, and another respondent said that their workplace had encouraged them to use the empirical method to estimate completeness of death registration at the district-level, which would be followed by a national-level dissemination of completeness at the country and sub-national levels.

Career progression

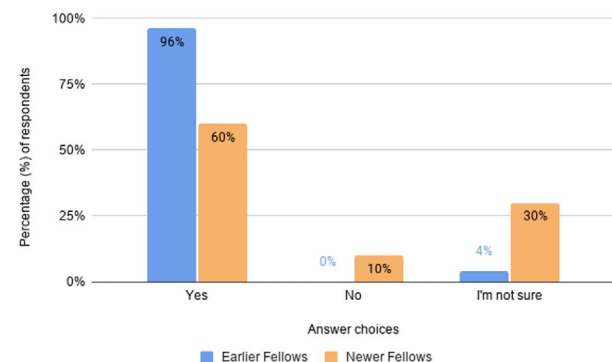
Of the 11 newer Fellows, 82 per cent held the same role within their same organisations that they had at the time they began their Fellowship. The two respondents that reported working in a new role remained working in CRVS-related positions at the same respective organisations, and one of these two respondents had received a promotion from the role they had held at the start of their Fellowship.

Part 3: Country context

Similarly to the earlier respondents, 20 per cent of the newer Fellows reported facing challenges in applying their new skills and knowledge. These challenges included a lack of political commitment from government stakeholders in implementing new CRVS interventions, difficulties finding time or resources to complete their reports, and COVID-19 related challenges.

Moreover, whereas all of the earlier Fellows and 90 per cent of newer Fellows affirmed that their superiors understood the importance of CRVS-strengthening, the proportion of respondents who reported that their superiors were actively trying to improve CRVS systems decreased from 96 per cent amongst the earlier Fellows to 60 per cent of the newer Fellows – as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Responses to question, 'In your current workplace, do you feel that in general, the leadership team are actively trying to improve CRVS systems?'





One of the newer Fellows noted that their superiors could benefit from further understanding of how cause of death data can help with decision-making. Only 20 per cent of newer Fellows reported receiving “a lot” of support from their superiors, with 60 per cent reported receiving “some” support. The proportion of respondents that reported receiving a lot of support from their superiors also decreased from 35 per cent among the earlier Fellows to only 20 per cent of the newer Fellows.

Newer Fellows detailing the most immediate CRVS challenges facing their home countries mentioned inadequate budgets, poor completeness of birth and death notification in rural areas, lack of digitisation of CRVS processes, poor synchronisation between CRVS stakeholders, a high proportion of garbage codes, and the failure of national governments to prioritise CRVS-strengthening. These respondents suggested that greater funding, political will and collaboration between ministries, and greater use of CRVS data by policymakers may help overcome these challenges.

The program partners on this initiative include: The University of Melbourne, Australia; CDC Foundation, USA; Vital Strategies, USA; Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, USA; World Health Organization, Switzerland.

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics partners:



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