

## Phd Positions in the ArboCarib Program

**Department** Department of Medical Microbiology UMCG (University Medical Center Groningen)/ CBHRI  
**Work location** Curaçao & Groningen  
**Apply no later than** 20 August 2017

### Working environment - ARBOCARIB Program

Public health impact of chronic chikungunya illness and performance/utilisation of the health care system in the face of arboviral (dengue, chikungunya, Zika) epidemics in Curaçao. Two PhD studentships are offered within the ARBOCARIB Program, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). PhD candidates will be registered within the Department of Medical Microbiology, University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG), University of Groningen, the Netherlands. ARBOCARIB is an interdisciplinary collaboration amongst the Department of Medical Microbiology, UMCG; the Population Research Center, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen; the Curaçao Biomedical & Health Research Institute (CBHRI), Ministry of Health, the Environment and Nature, and St. Elisabeth Hospital, Curaçao; and the Academic Medical Center, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE POSITION OF PHD-1 :Job summary PhD-1

The last decades have witnessed a rapid expansion of emerging and re-emerging arboviruses worldwide. Curaçao, a Caribbean island within the Kingdom of The Netherlands, still experiences the effects of the two last major epidemics, chikungunya in 2014-2015 and currently Zika. Within ARBOCARIB, we intend to evaluate the impact these epidemics have had on Curaçao's population and the lessons learned by the health system on epidemic preparedness and action. A cohort study of chikungunya infected individuals was initiated 3 years ago in Curaçao where more than 60% of individuals were found to be chronically affected by this disease. The intention is to monitor this population and evaluate the impact of chronic disease clinically and on quality of life. Concomitantly, a case-control study will be set up to compare willingness, motives and barriers towards mosquito breeding sites control. The Project will be carried out as a collaboration between Dutch and Caribbean partners from Curaçao.

#### Specific PhD-1 Project objectives: Job description PhD-1

- To compare the impact of chronic chikungunya disease and the influence of Zika/dengue infection in our known cohort of individuals 3 months to 4 years after the chikungunya epidemic.
- To assess community preparedness and willingness to control mosquito breeding sites.

The PhD candidate will carry out field work in Curaçao for at least 2 years where clinical evaluation of chronic chikungunya patients and their quality of life will be carried out. The student will set up a case-control study to evaluate community performance towards mosquito breeding site control. We expect to enroll around 800-1000 individuals Potential collaborations with entomological projects are expected. The student will design the study, questionnaires, carry out data collection in Curaçao, perform data analysis and publish project results. The PhD candidate is expected to bring innovative thinking into ways to examine the above mentioned objectives.

#### Requirements PhD-1:

- Applicants must hold an excellent Master's degree or equivalent in Medicine, Public Health, Biology or Health Science.
- He/she should be willing to spend at least two years working in Curaçao.
- Ability to scientifically write in English and present findings. English proficiency (TOEFL > 6.5, IELTS > 92 or equivalent)
- Ability to speak Dutch and/or Papiamentu or willing to learn these languages.
- Be in the first 4 years of their career and not yet have been awarded a doctoral degree.
- Preferably having experience of working in the Caribbean region or other non-western settings.
- Experience in carrying out data collection from individuals/patients, preferably in tropical settings.
- Be proactive, have team work skills and experience in supervision of other students or personnel.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE POSITION OF PHD-2 : Job summary PhD-2

The current arboviral co-epidemics of dengue, chikungunya and Zika superimpose major burdens on the afflicted countries. Curaçao still experiences the effects of the last two major epidemics, chikungunya in 2014-2015 and currently Zika. We intend to evaluate the impact these epidemics have had on Curaçao's population and the lessons learned by the health system on epidemic preparedness and action. Through this project we aim to provide insights and recommendations to improve health policies and epidemic preparedness towards vector-borne viral diseases in Curaçao applicable to the Caribbean islands within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Project will be carried out as a collaboration between Dutch and Caribbean partners from Curaçao.

#### Specific PhD-2 Project objectives:

To understand the preparedness, performance and utilisation of the Curaçao health care system in the face of arboviral (dengue, chikungunya, Zika) epidemics.

- To explore how knowledge, attitude, cultural beliefs and practices play a role in the access to health care and health seeking behavior.
- To examine the coverage, performance and the culture of public health institutions and their learning processes from one epidemic to the other.

#### Job description PhD-2

The PhD candidate will carry out field work in Curaçao for at least 2 years gathering data to understand the individual's health seeking behaviour (HSB) and the performance/utilisation of the health system with regards to arboviral epidemics. The cultural perceptions and cultural schemas that influence HSB will be examined through individual questionnaires, in-depth interviews and participant observations. The performance of the health system in Curaçao will be estimated both in a quantitative and qualitative manner: i) by analysing the flow of patients that attend the health services based on models (e.g. Piot's model); ii) by examining how public health institutions and practitioners prepare themselves to the onset of epidemics and how they learn from previous experiences. The student will design the study, questionnaires, carry out data collection in Curaçao, perform data analysis and publish project results. The PhD candidate is expected to bring innovative thinking into ways to examine the above mentioned objectives.

#### Requirements PhD-2:

- Applicants must hold an excellent Master's degree or equivalent in Social science (Medical anthropology or Medical sociology), Public Health or Medicine with specific experience of working on health systems research.
- Be in the first 4 years of their career and not yet have been awarded a doctoral degree.
- Preferably having experience of working in the Caribbean region or other non-western settings.
- Ability to conduct fieldwork and work with a variety of stakeholders.
- Ability to scientifically write in English and present findings. English proficiency (TOEFL > 6.5, IELTS > 92 or equivalent)
- He/she should be willing to spend at least two years working in Curaçao.
- Knowledge of qualitative methods and mixed methods.
- Be proactive, have team work skills and experience in supervision of other students or personnel.
- Ability to speak Dutch and/or Papiamentu or willing to learn these languages.

**Additional requirements for both positions:** Applicants should be highly motivated, enthusiastic, willing to work in a multinational and multidisciplinary team, be proficient in English and willing to learn Dutch and Papiamentu. Required languages: English, level Good to Excellent.

The UMCG has a preventive Hepatitis B policy. You may be required to build up sufficient protection against Hepatitis B before you can be appointed. Vaccination is provided by the UMCG if necessary.

**What do we offer:** The offered PhD positions are for 4 years, full time employment: 36 hours/week, starting date: 1st October 2017. University Medical Center Groningen (UMCG) and University of Groningen (RUG) are an inclusive, equal opportunity employer offering attractive conditions and benefits.

Your salary is € 2.266,- gross per month in the first year up to a maximum of € 2.903,- gross per month in the last year (scale PhD). In addition, the UMCG will offer you 8% holiday pay, an 8.3% end-of-year bonus and a development budget. The terms of employment comply with the Collective Labour Agreement for Medical Centers (CAO-UMC).

**How to apply:** The application must be a single pdf file including motivation letter, CV, copies of Master's degree or equivalent, list of grades, English proficiency certificate (TOEFL > 6.5, IELTS > 92 or equivalent) and 2 letters of recommendation, one of them from the Master thesis supervisor.

The application should be emailed to: [arbocarib@umcg.nl](mailto:arbocarib@umcg.nl) • Subject heading: ARBOCARIB Phd application • Deadline for application: 20th August 2017

Selected candidates will be informed via email and a date of interview organised either personally or via Skype. Tentative dates of interview: 11th – 15th September 2017.

Additional information can be found by writing to:

Dr. Adriana Tami at [a.tami@umcg.nl](mailto:a.tami@umcg.nl) and Dr. Ajay Bailey at [a.bailey@rug.nl](mailto:a.bailey@rug.nl) or to Prof. Dr. Ashley Duits at [ajduits@gmail.com](mailto:ajduits@gmail.com) and Izzy Gerstenbluth at [izzy.gerstenbluth@gmail.com](mailto:izzy.gerstenbluth@gmail.com)