



Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine

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Ilana Schafer DVM '08 recognized by CDC for contributions to Veterinary Public Health

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has awarded Dr. Ilana Schafer '08 the 2017 [James H. Steele Veterinary Public Health Award](#) for her work to control outbreaks of Ebola Virus Disease and other zoonotic diseases.

The Steele award recognizes individuals who have completed CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) fellowship and gone on to make significant contributions to veterinary public health. Currently, Schafer is a veterinary epidemiologist in the Bacterial Special Pathogens Branch, but in her various positions at CDC, she has worked on high hazard viruses including Ebola, Marburg, lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus, and hantavirus, as well as the bacterial infection leptospirosis.

Schafer got her first taste of international health and infectious disease work at Cornell, where she received two Expanding Horizons grants to spend summers in Brazil and Senegal while completing her DVM. "I got really interested in working in developing countries," says Schafer. "Working on diseases that are transmitted from animals to people is really fascinating to me." She went on to pursue a masters of science in public health and then completed the EIS fellowship, a 2-year postdoctoral fellowship in applied epidemiology.



Schafer at work in the field

Schafer joined CDC's [Viral Special Pathogens Branch](#) in the summer of 2012, just in time for three Ebola outbreaks and one Marburg outbreak. "As soon as I started, I was out the door working on four different outbreaks," Schafer says.

While tracking Ebola cases and exposures, Schafer realized that data entry and management could be greatly improved. She partnered with the CDC software group, Epi Info, to develop an app to help track outbreaks of Ebola and similar diseases. When the 2014-2015 Ebola outbreak began in Guinea, she was on the first CDC team to deploy. She successfully set up the new app to track the outbreak in Guinea and also supported its use in Liberia

and Sierra Leone.

The Steele award also recognizes Schafer's work to build up the epidemiology program for leptospirosis, an underdiagnosed bacterial infection that affects people and animals worldwide.

-By Patricia Waldron