



VIEW POINT

FACULTY-STUDENT MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR PRE-CLINICAL MEDICAL STUDENTS AT CHITWAN MEDICAL COLLEGE, NEPAL: A TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Mentorship program has become a proven educational strategy in the context of contemporary medical education. The idea of mentorship is based on personal relationship in a professional setting where the mentor helps the mentee in realizing their full potential in attaining both personal and professional goals. The individualized guidance and support provided to the students not only enhances academic knowledge but also creates lasting relations and nurtures confidence and character. This viewpoint aims to shed light on the commendable initiatives taken by Chitwan Medical College on Faculty-Student Mentorship program tailored for preclinical undergraduate medical-students in their journey through medical school. The program is designed to help students navigate the early challenges of medical school and provide them with guidance and support to develop their professional identity.

INTRODUCTION

Young pre-clinical undergraduate medical-students experience burnout owing to curriculum overload, high stake exams with very little supervision and dearth of emotional support.¹ Medical education system in the United States and Europe addressed the challenge by introducing the mentorship program during the early nineties. The mentorship program is grounded by the philosophy that successful medical education extends beyond textbooks and classrooms recognizing the significance of personal connections and the impact of experienced guidance on the holistic development of medical students.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is defined as "A process whereby an experienced, highly regarded, empathetic person (the mentor) guides another (usually younger) individual (the mentee) in the development and re-examination of their own ideas, learning, and personal and professional development."² Mentoring programs play a major role in shaping the career prospects of aspiring medical professionals by offering a supportive atmosphere for education that fosters personal growth and career advancement.³ Mentorship program started as early as 1985 from Germany

and gained popularity in medical education which was later introduced in countries around Europe and America. Despite its introduction over 30 years ago and evidenced as effective strategy, it has failed to gather momentum in our part of the world.

Introduction of Faculty-Student Mentorship Program (FSMP)

Chitwan Medical College officially introduced Faculty-Student Mentorship program for preclinical undergraduate medical-students in 2011. A mentoring guideline with predefined areas for mentorship program was prepared which included academic monitoring, progress evaluation, assessment evaluation and feedback. Each faculty from the school of medicine were randomly assigned as mentor for a group of 6-8 students as mentees.

The mentoring guidelines is in its introductory stage which could benefit from adding regular meeting schedules and compulsory participation.⁴ A more logical careful matching of mentors and mentees could improve "personal chemistry"⁵ which has been strongly related to academic achievements and student satisfaction.^{4,6} Sometimes mentors feel burdened

as mentoring is an additional and time-consuming assignment which also needs to be addressed. A faculty-mentor with a senior-student mentor could work well.^{7, 8} The mentor-mentee ratio is appropriate as the recommended guideline.

Aim of the Faculty-Student Mentorship Program

Since the FSMP is tailored to preclinical undergraduate medical students, the primary aim of the program is to provide immediate support network to the new environment. Besides these mentors, encourage students to achieve academic excellence, suggest study strategies, plan life as a medical student and deal with stress, however the key feature of the program is academic development. Mentor-mentee meeting helps reflect academic achievements, provide future directions, improve communication and lasting relationships. There are no available data from the institute to claim all the aims, however, informal discussion with mentees clearly highlights the advantages. The impact of such mentorship program on mentees from different background and socioeconomic status can be studied in the future.

The meeting frequency⁴ can be increased in providing immediate network of safety and support to debrief students' emotional experiences.^{1,9} Also, the attendance in the meetings could be made compulsory which signals group mentoring as a meaningful part.³

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Evaluation of the FSMP: There are no tools developed for the evaluation of the mentorship program. To start with, a tool can be developed for both the mentor and mentee to evaluate their satisfaction of the program as a whole.⁷

2. Amending the mentor selection process: The mentees could benefit a lot more if pairing process would be thoughtful, considering both the academic and personal needs of the mentees.

3. Need for continuation into clinical years: Studies have reported a requirement of longer duration of mentorship program to foster professional development and student development^{9, 10} Physician mentors would better foster professionalism in clinical settings. The mentees have taken the program very well and are even more motivated to take it into clinical years.

4. Motivated Mentor Force: A motivated mentor force is the key to sustainability of FSMP. The program does not generate any revenues and is sustained by voluntary motivated mentor force, however, providing a small financial reward or academic promotion may determine the viability of the program.³

5. Requirement of faculty training: There is a need for regular training for mentors to ensure they are equipped with the necessary skills to guide and inspire their mentees. It could as well help the mentors in delivering effective feedback to their mentees.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

The mentorship program at Chitwan Medical college is a testament to the institution's dedication towards holistic development of the aspiring healthcare professionals. The program could set higher standards if a structured framework, fostering collaboration and prioritizing mentees could be met. As the program continues to exist, it could contribute significantly to the success and well-rounded development of the next generation of Chitwan Medical College graduates in the healthcare industry.

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