



VIEW POINT

FACULTY- STUDENT MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR PRE-CLINICAL MEDICAL STUDENT AT CHITWAN MEDICAL COLLEGE, NEPAL: STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Preclinical undergraduate medical studies boast a massive shift from the traditional high school and higher-secondary school educational environment. The vast curriculum load, different new forms of teaching-learning methods, performance pressure added to the separation anxiety from family challenges the newly admitted students both physically and mentally. Guidance and support is vital to navigating the intricate pathways of academics. In order to address this issue, the newly admitted pre-clinical undergraduate medical students are supported with the Faculty-Student Mentorship Program at Chitwan Medical College. This unique initiative not only creates a support and guidance system but also helps maintain a long-lasting relationship with the faculties at the institute. We believe it is a single stop solution to address various problems of undergraduate students fighting a battle mentally, emotionally and academically.

INTRODUCTION

Enrolling in undergraduate courses is a leap in educational setting which comes with its own sets of challenges and difficulties. Mentorship is “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, personal and professional development.”¹ A strong mentoring program helps establish the students quickly in new setting, develop appropriate attitude and behaviour promoting academic growth and maturation with easy adjustment.² Though academic guidance is the cornerstone to mentorship program, it also works as a platform for emotional support and to overcome inferiority complex.^{2,3}

The Faculty-Student Mentorship Program started at Chitwan Medical College in 2011. Following admissions into the college, students from the incoming batch are split into groups of 4-5 students each who are now assigned a mentor. During the first meetings, communication information is shared and future meetings, communication, and direction plans are considered and decided. Even though different groups may operate

differently as a result of inadequate mentoring resources, all mentors work to improve the academic excellence of the students.

Group meetings are held at the end of every internal assessment. During this 30-minute to 1-hour assessment review session, students are addressed both individually and as a group. These discussions usually include the areas of academics, accomplishments, and failures. Personal problems, counselling, or other personal interactions are not scheduled and conducted on an as-needed basis.

Effectiveness

- Relationship Building: Students from different backgrounds and settings come together which provides them with a platform to share experiences and build a bond among themselves.
- Psychosocial and humanistic attitude: Mentors' guidance and experiences foster the development of psychological soundness and well-being.
- Platform for self-expression: Student can freely express

their problems and concerns and seek guidance and help in this regard.

- **Group Dynamics:** A feeling of shared and collective experience is fostered among students. It also enhances collaboration and teamwork
- **Inclusiveness:** A small number of students ensured that all of them could express themselves freely with comfort and feel included.
- **Opportunities for involvement in research activities:** Under the guidance of a mentor, students are provided with opportunities to get oriented and involved in research activities.

Recommendations

- The provision of training to the mentors and formulation of mentoring guidelines could ensure a well-structured and uniform approach.^{4,5} This guideline could help keep track of meetings, and plan future meetings that would address a sense of detachment and lack of interest in the program.
- The provision of introducing a senior student mentor could help the mentees learn from the experience of the seniors. This could also help the continuation of the mentorship program into the clinical years.⁶
- The mentees and mentors matching could be conducted in a way that encourages the relationship to succeed. This may be through a validated matching process or mentees choosing their mentor.⁷

- Inclusion of counselling sessions on health and wellbeing could be incorporated into the program which would further help mentees attain better mental health.
- Expression of empathy and sympathy for personal growth and development besides academics could further build a lasting relationship and improve academic performance.⁶
- To build better group dynamics, mentor-mentee interaction could be promoted outside the formal setting. This could encourage active participation and communication.
- The college administration could play a more proactive role by providing adequate time, resources, and funding to ensure the sustainability of the program

CONCLUSION

The Faculty-Student Mentorship Program serves as a cornerstone for propelling students toward success in academic and professional development. The personalized guidance, academic and emotional support, and professional mentorship faucets of the mentorship program could help mentees emerge as competent and compassionate healthcare professionals. A well-designed mentorship program has the potential to set the bar high and inspire other medical facilities around the nation to emulate.

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