

Implementation of Mentorship Program for First Phase Students in Our Medical College

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Abstract

Background: Mentoring programs in medical schools provide students support and guidance that contribute to a fulfilling undergraduate medical experience. Mentorship is a kind of relationship in which more experienced will guide less experienced. **Objective:** To develop a Module for Mentorship program for First phase MBBS students and to assess the perception of students & faculty towards mentorship program. **Design:** Prospective study was conducted where the data was collected in two categories, first was perception of mentees towards the mentorship program and the second one was perception of mentors towards the program. **Subjects/Patients:** The students of first year MBBS course. **Methods:** The study was conducted on 100 first Phase MBBS students at ASCOMS, Jammu after seeking the Institutional Ethics Committee approval. Mentorship module was developed. Perception from students & faculty was sought through a pre-designed, self-administered questionnaire after seeking their written informed consent. Data was then assessed and analysed. **Results:** Mentorship improves communication between students and faculty. Mentorship helps students to improve academically. Mentorship helps to reduce anxiety and stress among 1st year MBBS students. **Conclusion:** Mentoring programs in medical schools provide students support and guidance that contribute to overall development.

Keywords: First year MBBS, Mentee, Mentor, Mentorship.

Introduction

Mentoring programs in medical schools exist to provide students support and guidance that contribute to a fulfilling undergraduate medical experience ^[1,2]. Although precise definitions of mentorship vary, it is typically described as a relationship between two individuals where the mentor guides the mentee in a reciprocal relationship through listening and reflection often to promote career development, professional growth, or satisfaction ^[3,4]. Although mentoring is undertaken for its benefits, mentoring programs face challenges as well. Mentors and mentees must have appropriate expectations of each other and mentors require the tools to effectively mentor an increasingly diverse student population ^[5]. The stress of complex medical course, emotional immaturity, and adaptations to new surroundings are the challenges faced by the new medical entrants. Mentoring is often considered a valuable component of undergraduate medical education with a variety of programs at established medical schools. Also, it is invaluable for trainees to have a point of contact to help guide them through challenges and share in the excitement of their successes. Mentorship is a kind of relationship in which more experienced will guide the less experienced. ^[6]. The mentors are also benefitted as this program provides a sense of internal satisfaction, improves their teaching skills, and thus helps in personal development. In addition,

the medical school community is also benefitted, as it improves clinical care, research as well as teaching ^[7]. Therefore, this study was designed to introduce and study the perception of mentees and mentors regarding mentorship program.

Methods

A mentorship program was designed for First Phase students of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS). Sensitization of all the mentors (faculty) and the mentees (students) was done. Thirty-three faculty members from various departments of the college were made mentors. Hundred First Professional students were divided among these faculty members according to their Roll Numbers. A regular monthly visit of mentees was scheduled with the mentor. In each session mentor communicated with every mentee and Mentoring was informal. Some mentees also contacted their mentors with contexts other than regular mentor meetings. At the end of mentorship program, the perception of mentors and mentees was taken using a validated and semi structured feedback questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on Likert Scale with strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N) as, disagree (DA) and strongly disagree (SDA). Data was collected.

Results

In response to few open-ended questions, Majority of the Students wanted to interact with their mentors more frequently at least once in a month. Additionally, some of the mentors were discussing matters in a group to which many of the students were not comfortable with. Each student wanted to get more time individually. Few of the mentees had expressed their inability to meet their Mentors according to the mentors allotted time, where the mentees were busy in their everyday academics along with scheduled tests. Some of the students wanted to be given a choice to choose their mentors. Suggestions were also poured in regarding space privacy or preferred discussion on WhatsApp. One odd student wanted a refreshment during the sitting.

In response to open ended questions for the mentors, they suggested different things like some wanted that the Biodata of the students be handed to the teachers beforehand. A problem of proper sitting room was suggested by some. Some mentors wanted a proper dress code for the students. Some Mentors were falling short of time for the sessions. Students were not adhering to the time slots. They were meeting after college hours. Most of the mentors wanted that the students contact them during the college hours only. Some of the mentors suggested the information to be passed to the parents as well.

Discussion

Table 1: Perception of the students about the mentorship program

S No.	Question	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
1	Is the Mentor easy to approach	52%	35%	12%	0.7%	1%
2	Mentorship is held at regular intervals	41%	45%	12%	2%	x
3	Mentor provides me with regular feedback of attendance and academics	40%	42%	16%	2%	x
4	Mentor facilitated my participation in professional activities like seminars and quiz	42%	38%	18%	0.3%	x
5	Mentorship helped me in reducing anxiety and stress	40%	43%	17%	%	x
6	Mentor could communicate with me outside the working hours	34%	47%	17%	2%	0.7%
7	Mentorship should be continued in 2nd year	34%	43%	17%	0.3%	1%
8	Mentorship is an extra burden on me	19%	6%	9%	37%	45%
9	Could I improve in academics with each session	32%	50%	12%	2%	2%
10	Was your mentor easily trustworthy, approachable, enthusiastic, could discuss my personal life also	30%	47%	16%	0.3%	1%

Likert scale: SA-Strongly agree, A-Agree, SD-Strongly disagree, DA-Disagree

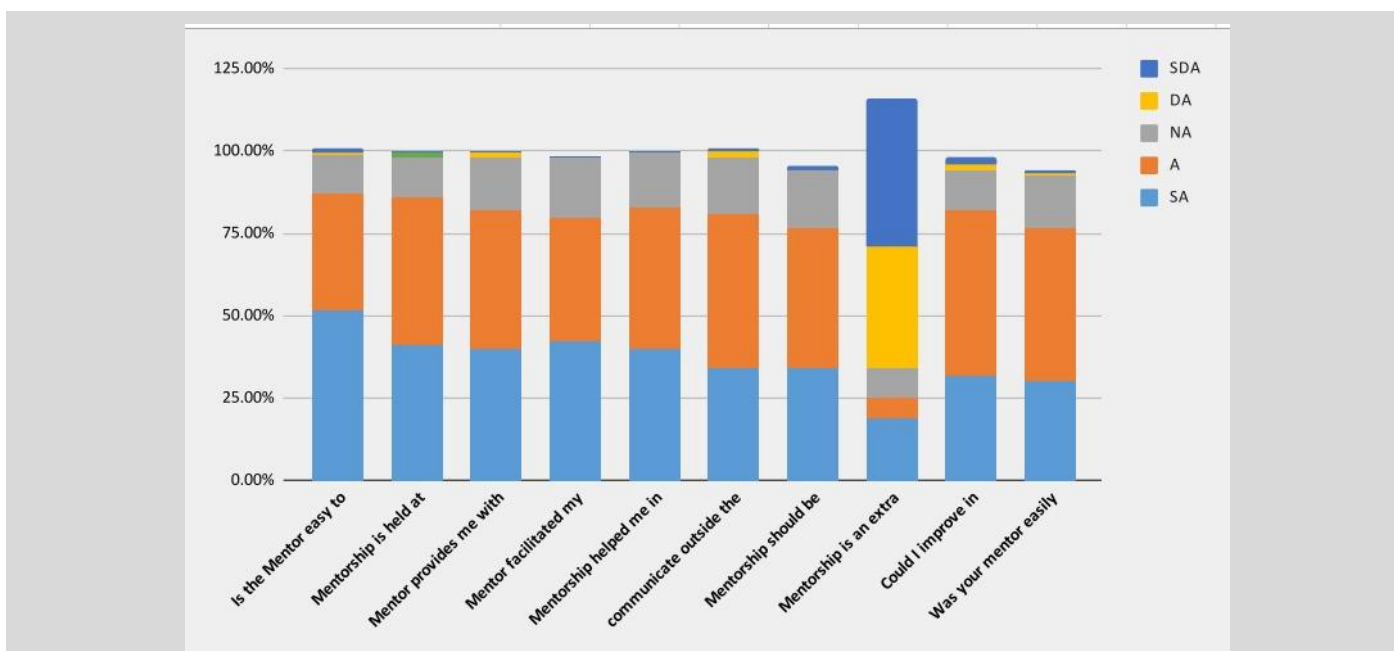


Figure 1: Perception of Mentors regarding mentorship program

Table 2: Perception of the faculty about the mentorship program

S. No.	Question	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
1	Mentorship has improved my communication with students	95%	2%	x	x	1%
2	Mentorship helped me understand student's problems in a better way	95%	1%	x	x	2%
3	Mentorship made me more empathetic and compassionate towards students	99%	1%	x	x	X
4	Mentorship helped me improve my teaching	91%	3%	x	3%	X
5	I wish to continue as mentor for future batches	93%	3%	x	3%	X
6	Mentorship is an extra burden on me.	29%	x	x	2%	64%
7	Was the number of students allotted to you more	29%	1%	x	1%	67%
8	I would have been a better Doctor if I had a mentor too	93%	1%	x	1%	X

Likert scale: SA-Strongly agree, A-Agree, SD-Strongly disagree, DA-Disagree

One of the major advantages of mentorship is reduction in stress and anxiety especially in a medical school [11]. These findings are consistent with our observations too, where a high percentage of students have responded as strongly agreeing to it. Many studies have been conducted which have proven the overall effectiveness of mentorship program. A systematic review identified that mentorship has an important influence on personal development, career guidance, career choice, and research productivity, including publication and grant success [12]. We do have feedback where the mentees were highly satisfied with program.

Mentoring is an opportunity where mentees can come and express their grievances and mentor is there to listen to their problems and gives solutions so that mentee can think over the possibilities and can make their own decisions [11]. Our work showed the same effectiveness as our mentors have been patient listeners and were all student friendly.

Both Mentors and the mentees responded that the mentorship program did improve the communication between both of them, which could help the mentees to discuss their personal problems with the mentors. After the assessment, it was found out that almost all the mentors have felt that with each session, they had become more empathetic and compassionate towards students. Majority of Mentors feel that the program has helped them understand student's problems in a better way. It also helped the faculty to improve their teaching skills. These findings are consistent with observations made by some authors [11,13].

Most of the students at the start of medical career were very shy and there were not interacting well with mentors. The reasons for the same were found out from open ended questions. They wanted set meetings with the mentee individually. Many studies have reiterated that Mentors provide encouragement and support required by the students for improving learning habits, interpersonal dealings, communication skills, problem solving strategies and positive attitude [11].

From the analysis we can understand, students seem to have a strong belief the program should be held at regular intervals, in the times to come. From the results it is evident, that mentors were satisfied giving advice to the mentees. They were happy to see an academic improvement along with an overall personality development. Mentors had a positive approach for continuing as mentors for the future batches. Similar results were there in a Meta-analysis of 112 individual research studies where they found that mentoring has significant behavioural, attitudinal, relational, health-related, motivational, and career benefits [14].

Many of our faculty did believe that the number of students given to them was more and the Program was becoming an extra Burden on them with time. This could be ascribed to the busy schedule of the clinicians. And that they were not able to justify their responsibility. A vast majority of the faculty had a significant realization at this point of their life. During the conduct of their sessions, they had started feeling, that things could have been better for them too, if at all they had some Mentors in their lives too.

In the open-ended questions given, students responded by writing that their mentors were taking extra pains in solving their problems and preparing them for a bright career ahead. Similar findings were there in a study conducted among 334 students to understand the need and importance of mentorship in the institutions of national importance such as NITs, IIITs, IITs in India. Majority of the students stated their opinion, that a mentor is someone who takes special interests in helping students to develop into successful professionals. Also, the study suggested that, mentorship helps teachers as well as students to gain deep knowledge of various fields which in turn is useful for themselves as well as their students for planning their future academic endeavours [15]. Our mentors also had similar approach towards their mentees.

Still Long-term study is required to know the efficacy on a long-term basis and changes in mentors with time and any amendments required for the shortcomings in the mentorship program, through the feed backs throughout the year and of more batches of students. Mentorship must be introduced in all educational institutes as a part of curriculum.

Conclusion

Mentorship program was implemented in our college for 1st year MBBS students. Mentors provided an overall supportive environment to take care of students' professional, academic and personal growth. This program helped to build up a better student-teacher relationship. Mentorship should be continued throughout the course of MBBS. Long term studies are required to know the long-term effectiveness of mentorship program. So, in my viewpoint adding this component as a must do, in the CBME curriculum by the NMC is a step in the right direction. Further, it is well accepted by both students as well as faculty, as has been observed in this study.

Declarations

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Conflict of interest

I have no conflicts of interest

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Ethical Clearance

Taken from the University Ethics Committee.

Trial details

Not applicable

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