

Peer mentorship in medicine: a scheme for foundation trainees

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Aims

- > To initiate a peer-led mentorship scheme linking foundation and middle-grade trainees.
- > To evaluate the effectiveness of the programme in two London hospitals and to consider barriers to initiating it in other hospitals.

Methods

Between August 2013 and 2014, 18 mentee (foundation trainees):mentor (middle-grade trainees) pairs were established at Barnet Hospital. Mentees and mentors were recruited through email. Individuals were matched according to location, career aspirations and personal requests.

Mentors received training via a formal teaching session and a *BMJ* e-learning module. Mentors were supported by scheme organisers and a consultant lead. Pairs were additionally provided with a written guide.

In August 2015, the scheme was also introduced to the Royal Free Hospital; a further 30 pairs were matched.

Results

Feedback was analysed from the 2014 pilot programme. Qualitative data collected from mentees were extremely positive: 'he tailored our meeting to suit my career goals and provided me with multiple opportunities for my professional development' and 'great opportunity to speak to someone in a similar field further along in the training programme to gauge the kind of things that one would need to secure a similar training post in the future'. 90% of mentees reported the programme to be useful.

Compared to data collected at the beginning of the scheme, areas of improved confidence included: achieving foundation competencies (30% increment), applying for jobs (32%), the paper portfolio (28%), CV development (34%) and interview preparation (26%). Overall, the foundation doctors felt more confident in their roles, better supported and better equipped for future job applications.

Feedback from 2014–15 was positive, although it was noted that fewer mentee–mentor pairs continued throughout the year. In feedback sought from the Foundation Programme NCTFS Management Committee, the benefits of expanding the programme across other trusts was noted.

Conclusions

Valuable lessons learned: at a programme level, to establish the scheme early in the academic year to support new foundation trainees from the outset. Having a consultant lead and dedicated scheme leads was invaluable in providing training, ongoing support and continuity. At an individual level, mentees felt that they benefited most from having mentors specifically in the fields that they wished to work in, so inclusion of mentors from a wide range of specialties is key.

We have demonstrated clear positive effects of instigating such a scheme among foundation trainees and feel that rolling this scheme out to all hospitals employing foundation trainees would be invaluable to their training. ■

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