



# Need Assessment of Peer mentoring in medical students in comparison with traditional mentoring system

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## **Abstract :**

**Background:** The training in medical schools is identified as full of stress and it is also observed that students undergo tremendous stress during various years of medical training. The students also face other stressing factors like social, environmental, physical, and family problems, which may affect their academic performance and may result in substance use.

**Aim of the study:** The present study is to assess the needs of the student for the effective mentorship program conducted in the institute.

**Methodology:** A cross sectional survey was conducted for the medical students of all academic years. Results showed that most of the students were anxious and has been terrified about the syllabus and exam pattern.

**Results:** Although the students received regular mentorship from faculty, they showed high possibility of open discussion about their problems either related to studies or about their personal problems are been comfortably handled and addressed by peers.

**Conclusions:** The following study gives an understanding of the students' need for peer mentoring, when a properly trained student to help each other will try to make others around him/her can lead to a better learning environment for all students with different types of learning styles.

**IndexTerms - Mentorship, Peer Mentoring, Learning styles**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The training in medical schools is identified as full of stress and it is also observed that students undergo tremendous stress during various years of medical training [1, 2]. For many students, first year brings a dislocation of environment along with the realization that it is impossible to master education completely. This challenges many students' previous self-image as successful and capable of "perfect mastery" [3]. The students also face other stressing factors like social, environmental, physical, and family problems, which may affect their academic performance and may result in substance use [4]

Mentoring is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor).[5]

Although mentoring schemes are effective they can also be problematic. However, these can often be reduced or eliminated by making sure there are specific procedures in place and adapting the scheme to the setting as it progresses. The main drawbacks for

the mentor are; the cost of time given to the scheme, misunderstood expectations and objectives, stress; including lack of sufficient skills. However, many of these problems can be reduced by extensive training for mentors and a thoroughly thought out scheme.

Peer mentoring is the process in which a pre-trained successful student teaches a concept or skill to another student or to a group of students under the leadership of the teacher (Gearheart et al., 1992). Peer tutoring is often referred to by educators as it increases the learning rate, contributes to social skill development, develops a range of other skills, and provides emotional benefits to the students. Peer mentoring suggests a two-way, reciprocal learning activity. It is mutually beneficial for both the mentor and the mentee as it involves the sharing of knowledge and experience between both parties.

Medical schools with formal peer-mentor programs have shown improvements in a range of outcomes including students' institutional and national board exam scores as well as communication and procedural skills. (Wong JG, Waldrep TD, Smith TG).[6]

## II. METHODOLOGY:

The Medical students as per Medical council of India proposed curriculum is trained to address the physical health related problems of the society. The University Grant Commission and NAAC initiated a mentoring system as a part of higher education for addressing the student issues and a measure to relieve stress and add direction to the enhancing career for an undergraduate student. Approximately 150 students enter our medical school each year. After enrollment, students are randomly assigned to one mentor who is a medical faculty of one of the various departments and remain with this mentor for that academic year. This assignment occurs with each incoming class so that across the 5 years of medical school, there are a total of 5-7 medical students per mentor every academic year.

Students receive mentorship through group and one-on-one activities. Meetings of mentorship occur at least monthly. A subset of meetings is combined so students across classes can share experiences. The mentorship activity is conducted as per mentor-mentees time limit and schedule. The activity outlines open ended questions and the mentor is given free hand to discuss as per the need of the mentee.

In an effort to expand our understanding of the medical student and the effectiveness of the mentorship program, we conducted a cross sectional survey of the medical students of all academic years.

The survey was designed to address the lacunae present in the traditional mentoring system and identify the need of the peer mentoring system among the medical students. The questionnaire was prepared and validated and has been circulated in a Google form. The questionnaire was called the need assessment of peer mentorship programs.

## III. RESULTS:

Total 160 participants from all semesters of medical course participated in the survey. Out of total participants, 113 (70.6%) female and 47 (29.4%) Male students filled the Google form of validated questionnaire. Majority of the students, 78 (48.8%) belong to MBBS-2nd Year, 70 (43.8%) belong to MBBS-3 year part-1.

### *Description about the student at the beginning of the course:*

100 (62.5%) Students responded that they were happy to join the course, 41.3% were anxious to form new friends, 38.1% agreed that they felt prepared to join this course, 47.5% informed they were confident that institute provides enough support in their journey, 63.7% agreed that they had the capability to develop subject knowledge at the beginning of the course, 41.3% agreed to have sufficient communication skills to pursue the course.

Problems faced by the students:

The majority (30.6%) agreed to be terrified about the syllabus and exam pattern, 33.8% are neutral, 26.9% agreed whereas 29.4% disagreed that the medical terminology was difficult to understand. Majority (36.9%) found that they found communicating with the peers was easier regarding the day to day issues faced during the course. Almost 45% agreed it was difficult to complete the syllabus, 38.1% mentioned that completing syllabus in time was difficult for them, 22.5% agreed that staying away from home and adjusting to a new environment was difficult. 38.8% were neutral about their personal time availability.

**Student Teacher Relationship:**

Majority (50.6%) agreed that the teachers were always supportive, 41.9% disagreed to the interaction between teacher-student is always high, around 39.4% agreed that all teachers were always approachable, 32.5% agrees that the assignments were always discussed with them, 44.4% agree that teachers were highly competent.

**Mentorship Program:**

All students were provided with a mentor when they joined the course, 61.9% agreed that mentorship was conducted regularly and 81.9% were mentored at least once in a month. While 36.2% students agreed that they could discuss their problems openly with their mentor, 32.5% students were neutral for the same, also 16.3% and 8.1% disagrees and strongly disagrees respectively that they could effectively discuss their problems with their mentors. Most of the students (67%) agreed that they get better help from peers during difficult times than teachers for study related issues. Only 17% agrees that they could discuss their personal problems with their mentors, 21.3% only agrees that their mentorship program was highly effective although 46.5% agreed that their mentor was highly approachable.

**Learning Methodology of the students:**

Around 42.5% agreed that studying in the group was comfortable. Majority (46.3%) mentioned that writing helped them to remember. Around 60% of the students were highly positive that they remember topics which they have discussed in the group rather than what they had studied alone, while 49.1% strongly agreed that they learn better when they practice hands on along with the peers.

**IV. DISCUSSION:****Mentor system:**

Mentoring is a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor). [15]

Mentoring brings many advantages, in that schemes elicit a variety of practical outcomes for the mentee, mentor and organization. The main advantages of the mentoring scheme are to help students explore their strengths and weaknesses in a confidential environment, always being able to find a source of help, reduced amount of attrition, and for the mentors, building their experiences and satisfaction of helping other students.

**Importance of mentor system:**

Mentoring brings many advantages, in that schemes elicit a variety of practical outcomes for the mentee, mentor and organization. The main advantages of the mentoring scheme are to help students explore their strengths and weaknesses in a confidential environment, always being able to find a source of help, reduced amount of attrition, and for the mentors, building their experiences and satisfaction of helping other students. Research studies have highlighted the following advantages:

- Tabbron et al. (1997) found that an important advantage of mentoring is the structure it allows us to explore strengths and weaknesses in a confidential atmosphere. His survey of students who had taken part in mentoring systems found that mentees often saw the mentors as a “mirror” or role model.
- Student mentors take responsibility for and contribute to a supportive environment for all pupils (Baginsky, 2004).
- It provides social and developmental support to mentees (Jacobi, 1991).
- Rewards for mentors include raised self esteem, social insight and development of interpersonal skills (Hall, 2003).
- Glaser, Hall and Halperin (2006) found that helpful mentors were rated highly on accessing university services and understanding university requirements. Furthermore, mentors were asked what the benefits they were having from participating in the scheme and these were improved communication skills and improved organizational skills.

• Klasen and Clutterbuck (2004) state that advantages for mentees include; competence (identifying development needs, action planning and problem solving), goal setting, motivation and satisfaction, networking opportunities, personal change and time-effectiveness. Advantages for the mentor include value, satisfaction, learning experience, credit and own reflection.

• Reduces attrition rates and stress through informal supportive relationships and promotes positive educational behaviours (Hill and Reddy, 2007).

#### *Typical problems of Mentoring Schemes:*

Although mentoring schemes are effective they can also be problematic. However, these can often be reduced or eliminated by making sure there are specific procedures in place and adapting the scheme to the setting as it progresses. The main drawbacks for the mentors are; the cost of time given to the scheme, misunderstood expectations and objectives, stress; including lack of sufficient skills.

However, many of these problems can be reduced by extensive training for mentors and a thoroughly thought out scheme. Research has highlighted some specific issues:

• Expectations and objectives may not be clearly understood by the mentee and mentor. The care elicited by the mentor should reflect natural relationships within the culture of the organization. This means that the mentor should not force themselves on the mentee (Tabbron et al, 1997).

• The stress mentoring causes for mentors. This may be problematic for second and third year students (Earnshaw, 1995). However, Treston (1999) points out that final year mentors actually had a need for “unstructured extracurricular activity as a break from their studies”.

• Jucovy (2000) found frequent problems with mentoring include conflicting messages from staff, lack of consistency in meeting mentees, absenteeism of the student, and frustration of mentor by lack of impact on mentee.

• Concerns for mentors include; pressure to take on the mentoring role, lack of requisite skills, not taking the coaching and feedback role seriously, no perceived reward, benefit or payoff, possessiveness of mentee (Murray & Owen, 1991).

#### *Need of Peer mentoring:*

Peer mentoring is the process in which a pre-trained successful student teaches a concept or skill to another student or to a group of students under the leadership of the teacher (Gearheart et al., 1992). Peer tutoring is often referred to by educators as it increases the learning rate, contributes to social skill development, develops a range of other skills, and provides emotional benefits to the students (McKellar, 1986; Ayvazo and Aljadeff-Abergel, 2014). The students both improve their friendship relations and assist each other in learning thanks to the group studies they perform within the scope of peer tutoring. When studying together, using more similar and clear utterances positively affects the success of the peers (Karakoç, 2002). In addition, peer mentoring contributes to student motivation towards courses besides developing discussion, expression and interrogation skills (Topping et al., 2011). Medical schools with formal peer-mentor programs have shown improvements in a range of outcomes including students' institutional and national board exam scores as well as communication and procedural skills. (Wong JG, Waldrep TD, Smith TG)

#### **V. CONCLUSIONS:**

The following study gives an understanding of the students' need for peer mentoring, when a properly trained student to help each other will try to make others around him/her can lead to a better learning environment for all students with different types of learning styles. Most of the time, students are unable to contact the faculty and sometimes even parents for difficult times related to studies or even their personal problems. An appropriate themed and trained group to achieve self-directed learning can facilitate students' mental capacity to handle pressure of higher education.

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