

The Critical Contribution of Mentor: Mentee Relationships in Your Career Development



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Outline of this Talk

- **Training as an MD in research**
 - **Foundational considerations**
 - **Initial steps you can take**
- **Key role of mentorship**
 - **What it is and what it is not**
 - **Effective mentorship and menteeship**
- **Choosing a research mentor**
- **Conflict of interest in mentoring**

MDs Training to be Clinician Scientists: Initial Considerations

- **What is your goal?**
 - E.g. Transition from a modest level of experience in research coupled with great motivation to a level of significant sophistication and productivity and preparation for a subsequent stage of continued development in the context of a highly competitive health research ecosystem.
 - E.g. Transition from deep level of research training followed by extensive clinical training and now looking to further develop research prowess.
- **Science is complex and quite different from clinical medicine.**
- **Progress in the research development pathway is dependent on outcome-based progress.**

What is Known to Help You on Your Path?

- **Mentorship**
- **Training in leading-edge science**
 - If you don't train at the edge and within excellence, you won't know what excellence looks like.
- **Training in a context with the resources to pursue research in a deep, exploratory, and imaginative manner.**
- **Great collegial environment – great colleagues and resources to support research**
- **Dedicated commitment to research by you and your institution.**

Some Critical Initial Questions You May be Asking Yourself or Being Asked

- **Do I need a perfect vision of what my research will be in 5 years:**
 - **NO**
- **Do I need to work on some gap that is complementary to my identity as a clinician?**
 - **YES (not absolutely Yes, but highly recommended)**
- **Do I need to work with a clinician scientist in my specialty/subspecialty?**
 - **NO**
- **Do I need to work on a gap area that I find really interesting?**
 - **YES**

Some Initial Actions

- **Read in the area of interest**
 - Nature News and Views
 - Papers if you can understand them
- **Talk to people in the subject area to:**
 - Validate cutting edge issues
 - Identify leading scientists
- **Develop a short list of candidate researchers**
- **Discuss with your faculty leaders and faculty mentors**
 - Plan for where to engage in subspecialty training and research training
- **Align your mentor(s) with your goals**
 - Career mentorship; research mentorship

Why A Mentor is Critical

Let's Dig Into Mentorship

What is mentorship?

- **A process whereby an experienced, highly regarded, empathetic person (the mentor) guides another (usually younger or more junior) individual (the mentee) in the development and re-examination of their own ideas, learning, and personal and professional development.**
 - **Standing Committee on Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education. Supporting doctors and dentists at work: An enquiry into mentoring. 1998.**
www.mcgl.dircon.co.uk/scopme/mentor5.pdf

Why Mentorship in Academic Medicine?

- **Mentorship ranked highest among career development strategies (Association of Professors of Medicine)**
- **Academic clinicians who were mentored:**
 - Got more research grants
 - Published more papers
 - Progressed more quickly in academic promotion
 - Reported greater academic self-efficacy
 - Reported greater career satisfaction
- **So, in contrast to lots of other issues, there exists A LOT of evidence in favor of mentorship**

Clinical Trials. 2011; 8: 765-767; *Acad Med* 2004;79:865-72; *Acad Med*. 1998;73:318-323; *Am J Surg* 2011;201:260-3; *J Gen Int Med* 2007;22:210-4; *JAMA* 2006;296:1103-15; *BMC Med Educ* 2011;11:13; *Med Teach*. 2002;24:550-557; *J Obstetr Gynecol Can* 2004;26:127-36; *JAMA* 2006;296;1103-15

What Mentorship is Not

- **≠ role model :**
 - ‘Passive, observational learning model in which an individual attempts to emulate observed, desirable behaviours and qualities’
- **≠ coach:**
 - ‘Provide guidance around a specific task/performance/achievement’

‘Yoda is a coach, teaching Luke how to use the Force, and,

Obi-Wan Kenobi is a mentor, showing him what it means to be a Jedi knight.’

- www.management-mentors.com

What Are Characteristics of Effective Mentors, Mentees, Mentor-Mentee Dyads?

- **4 studies explored mentees**
 - Mentees should be in the ‘driver’s seat’
 - Respectful, organised, committed
- **6 studies explored mentors**
 - **Personal:** altruistic, understanding, honest, nonjudgmental, active listener, motivator
 - **Relational:** accessible, sincere, compatible
 - **Professional:** knowledgeable and experienced

Attributes of the Mentor : Most commonly Cited Attributes in 350 nominations for Best Mentor

- **Altruistic, selfless**
- **Unbridled interest in the mentee**
- **Honest**
- **Good listener**
- **Engages in straightforward interchange with compassion**
- **Maintains confidentiality**
- **Integrity**
- **Trustworthy**
- **Patient**
- **Available**
- **Respectful**
- **Compassionate**
- **Enthusiastic**
- **Inspiring**

Lee A, Dennis C, Campbell P. Nature's Guide for Mentors. *Nature* 447: 791-797, 2007.

Attributes of the Mentor : Most Commonly Cited Attributes in 350 nominations for Best Mentor

- **Personality traits**
- **Helping to build the mentee's career**
 - **promoting, connecting, informing, networking**
- **Listening, hearing, supporting**
- **Exhibiting support beyond the confines of work**
- **Encourages self reflection**

Attributes of the Mentee

- **Willing**
- **Open**
- **Engaged**
- **Self-starting**
- **Reflective**
- **Able to define:**
 - **Values**
 - **Aspirations / Goals**
 - **What needs further problem-solving and action i.e. next steps**
- **Able to take ownership and direct the relationship**
 - **The mentee is the ONLY person in this dyad who knows what success looks like**

What are the Characteristics of an Effective Relationship?

- **5 studies**
- **Personal connection – ‘chemistry’**
- **Underlying values**
 - **Based on trust, honesty, open communication and mutual respect**
 - **Clarify expectations of mentor and mentee, including intellectual property**

Managing Mentoring: Special Considerations

- **There is no single formula for good mentoring**
- **Your goal is not to create a “mini me”**
- **Mentoring is a personal relationship but you are not a “friend”**
- **Women/under-represented minorities:**
 - are less likely to identify mentors
 - may be less likely to advocate for themselves
 - May have less self confidence
 - May need more encouragement
- **There need not be only 1 mentor**
 - Multiple mentoring models
 - Peer-to-peer mentoring

Research Mentor: A subset of Mentor

**A RESEARCH SUPERVISOR MAY
ALSO BE A MENTOR BUT THERE
ARE DIFFERENT ‘STRINGS
ATTACHED’**

Choosing a Research Mentor: Understand the Context of Your Training

- **The selection of your research mentor is dependent on:**
 - Your background and experience
 - Context of your training – medical school, residency, fellowship.....
 - Your aspirations
- **Your next training destination:**
 - **Example: PSDP**
 - Read and reflect on PSDP program materials
 - Mission of the PSDP – train pediatricians as scientists
 - Learn what it means to be a scientist, and what it means to be a clinician scientist
- **Understand the roles of individuals who will play a critical role in your next training application:**
 - Research Mentor
 - Nominating and Sponsoring Chairs (PSDP)
 - Scientific Oversight Committee (residency, fellowship)
- **Read and consult**
- **Start doing this yesterday!**

Some Critical Attributes of the Research Mentor

- **At the top of her/his research game**
- **Well funded**
- **Experienced mentor**
- **Critical mass in the research program – not too big, not too small!**
- **Publishes exciting work with mentees in leadership roles**
- **Understands what it means to train a clinician versus a PhD graduate student/PDF**
- **Understands and is on board with your goals**
- **A willing partner for you as a trainee**
 - Will prepare the fellowship application *with* you
 - Will meet with you on a regular basis during your training
 - Will support you in your learning of techniques by providing supportive linkages to other ‘pros’ in the research program
 - Will facilitate a research program via which you can reasonably expect to be productive within 2 years.
 - Will allow supported fellows graduating from the research program to take a portion of the project...

Can the Research Mentor be the Career Mentor?

- **Yes, but - be aware of the following issues:**
 - **The research mentor (supervisor) has conflict of interest – what is good for her/him may not be in your best interests**
 - How long you stay in the research program
 - Nature and quantity of your productivity
 - What you work on
 - What you leave the research program with.....
 - **How you can manage conflict of interest issues:**
 - Be aware!
 - Discuss these openly with the research mentor
 - Discuss these with other members of your mentorship team including oversight committee
 - Experiment with independent decision-making

Summary

- **At the outset it is critical to undertake (i) self-reflection, and (ii) understand the pathway you wish to undertake**
- **There are specific actions you can take to improve your chances of an outstanding training in research**
- **Mentorship is the strongest element in the career development toolbox**
- **Mentorship needs to be understood over time with respect to its objectives, your actions, and its effectiveness.**

Thank you!

YOUR QUESTIONS