
Mentor Guidelines: Interns in General Practice



“Mentoring for doctors in its widest sense has been an action probably since medicine was a recognised profession. Sharing information, experiences and wisdom is part of medical ethos.” (Steven, 2003, p8)

Prepared by Dr Lynn Hemmings - Medical Education Advisor
UTAS Rural and Regional Medical Training Hub

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to mentor interns undertaking a term in general practice. The following is a guide and some suggestions to help make this a positive and rewarding relationship for both you and your mentee.

Formal mentoring programs for medical students and doctors developed in the late 1990s and since then have become widespread. Several studies of medical mentoring report that there are positive outcomes for mentees including facilitating the development of a successful and satisfying career in medicine, contributing to the improvement of professionalism and performance, assisting in career decision making, and promoting overall wellbeing (Frei, 2010).

While many medical mentoring programs use consultants to mentor interns, there is evidence that having a mentor and mentee who are closer in terms of a personal and professional relationship, (such as a registrar and an intern), enables the mentor to more closely empathise with the challenges faced by the mentee.

BACKGROUND

The Rural Junior Doctor Training Innovation Fund (RJDTIF) is one component of the Commonwealth's Rural Integrated Training Pipeline (RITP), which aims to provide junior doctors with training in a rural primary care setting.

In 2017 Ochre Health was successful in their application for five intern positions in the Tasmanian Health Service (THS) to be funded by the RJDTIF. The funding provides an opportunity for interns in Tasmania to undertake a term in General Practice during their intern year.

For the first time, from January 2018, twenty interns in Tasmania will undertake a term in five general practices across Tasmania.

The Rural and Regional Postgraduate Training Hub is supporting this initiative by funding mentors for interns during their general practice term. We hope that this will help guide and support interns to transition to this new role and provide them with the best possible supportive learning environment.

DEFINITION OF MENTORING

Mentoring is more than 'giving advice' or passing on what the mentor's experience was in a particular area or situation. It's about motivating and empowering the mentee to identify their own issues and goals, and helping them to find ways of resolving or reaching them – not

by doing it for them or expecting them to 'do it the way I did it', but by understanding and respecting different ways of working (University of Cambridge, 2010).

It is important to establish that there is a distinction between the role of the mentor and the role of clinical supervisor. Mentoring is not for the purposes of clinical supervision, appraisal, performance management or other organisational requirements.

AIMS OF THE MENTOR PROGRAM FOR INTERNS IN GENERAL PRACTICE

The aims of the program include:

- to ensure that interns connect with support provided by mentors within a safe medical working environment;
- to provide an easier transition for interns in primary health care settings;
- to foster a one-on-one relationship encompassing individual attention and support;
- to help create an environment where the focus is on a reflective and experience sharing relationship;
- to engage, motivate and empower interns;
- to further develop the capabilities of both mentor and mentee;
- to provide additional support to interns who may be isolated from their family, friends and peers during the general practice term.

THE MENTOR'S ROLE

Mentoring is very different to the doctor / patient interaction and consultation where impulse and training is to intervene with advice. Mentoring is more dependent on active listening and the sharing of ideas and experiences.

The mentor's role is to empower the mentee to take charge of their own development. Your role includes:

Relationship building

- building trust and a strong rapport with your mentee
- support and encourage your mentee to build confidence
- be respectful of and sensitive to individual differences
- respond promptly to emails or call from your mentee

Information sharing

- share your knowledge about general practice, the medical profession, networks and experiences
- offer career advice

- refer to appropriate people/services for issues outside your experience

Facilitation

- actively listen and ask questions
- assist your mentee to achieve goals by encouraging them to find their own way
- encourage your mentee to take responsibility for their development and decision making.

Challenging

- constructively and respectfully challenge your mentee's expectations and ideas allowing them to gain insight into their decisions and actions
- encourage your mentee to listen, to clarify understanding, review and consider different perspectives
- stimulate your mentee's critical thinking and develop problem-solving skills.

Modelling

- be a role model for your mentee by sharing life experiences and thoughts

Visionary

- help them to envision their future and build their career by exploring options and offering opportunities.

THE MENTOR/MENTEE RELATIONSHIP

Garmel (2004) suggests that the successful mentor-mentee relationship requires the active participation of both parties and is dynamic over time.

In order to derive the most benefit from the relationship mentees will be encouraged to:

- be active and present in the relationship;
- understand the limitations of the role;
- use the mentor as a 'sounding board' to discuss issues and review their progress;
- be willing to share experiences with the mentor;
- be open to feedback; and
- take ownership for professional growth (from www.acem.org.au/mentoring)

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

Confidentiality

To enable the mentee to speak openly about issues that may be of concern to them it is vital that all discussions between mentor and mentee remain confidential. However, the mentee may be comfortable with you sharing the information with the Director of Clinical Training or the Medical Education Advisor so that measures can be put in place to assist them. There are some exceptional circumstances where legal obligations may require you to break this confidentiality. Ensure that you are both aware of your current legal reporting obligations. A factsheet can be found on the AHPRA website www.ahpra.gov.au

Performance Issues

Your role should not include performance management. This is the role of the Director of Clinical Training at the relevant hospital in conjunction with the GP Supervisor.

Support for the Mentor

Lynn Hemmings and Lizzi Shires will be available to provide advice about the role and to discuss any difficulties in the mentor/mentee relationship. Please do not hesitate to contact them.

EVALUATION OF THE GENERAL PRACTICE TERMS FOR INTERNS

During the year you will be invited to participate in a research project which aims to examine the views, experiences and needs of the interns in the General Practice setting and their GP Supervisors. This information will inform the development of the educational, training and support needs for interns and supervisors in general practice.

REFERENCES

- Australasian College for Emergency Doctors (2015) *Mentoring: a guide for emergency doctors*. ACEM Mentoring Program, Melbourne.
- Frei, E., Stamm, M. and Buddeberg-Fischer, B. (2010) Mentoring programs for medical students – a review of the PubMed literature 2000-2008. *BMC Medical Education*, 10 (32) 1-14.
- Garmel, G. (2004) Mentoring medical students in academic emergency medicine. *Acad Emerg Med*, 11 (12) 1351-1357.
- Shapiro, J. and Galowitz, P. (2016) Peer support for clinicians: A programmatic approach. *Academic Medicine*, 91 (9) 1200-1204.
- Standing Committee on Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education. (1998) *Supporting doctors and dentists at work: An enquiry into mentoring*. London, SCOPME.
- Steven, A. (2003) *Mentoring for doctors: enhancing the benefit*.
www.academia.edu/1402110/Mentoring