Optimizing the Mentor/Mentee Relationship

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Disclosures

• I have no relevant financial relationships to disclose as it pertains to the content of my presentation
What is a Mentor?

• A person with greater knowledge and/or experience

• An active partner in an on-going relationship who helps a learner to:
  • maximize potential
  • reach personal and professional goals
Why do you need a Mentor?

- Offers career guidance and advice
- Helps you navigate the treacherous waters of life as an academic surgeon
What are you looking for in a Mentor?

• What kind of help/guidance do you need?

• Research
  • Exposure to the basic research process
  • Development of Specific Research Skills

• Career guidance
  – Help in matching into a specific specialty
  – Academic vs. private practice?
  – Work/life integration
Resident Research Mentor

• Provides an opportunity to join in their established research program to:
  – Develop and support your growth in research
  – Provide you opportunities to take on projects
  – Develop research skills you will need

• What do you need from a research mentor?
  – Your past experience
  – You learning goals
Career Mentor

• Are they familiar with the specialty that you are most interested in?
  – Do they understand what is needed to be competitive to match into a fellowship?
  – Are they connected to others in the field?

• Are they familiar with the type of practice/job you are looking for?

• Are they familiar with the demands you have outside of the hospital?
  – Children or Spouse
Finding Good Mentors

• Choose someone
  • you like and respect
  • is knowledgeable in your area of interest
  • shares your values and ethics
  • who has the TIME
What is the Ideal Mentor?

- **Experience/Established Expertise**
  - Asking the write questions
  - Able to get work done and published

- **Available**
  - How many mentees do they have?
  - How much time can they spare?
  - Who else can support you?

- **Good communicator**
Questions to ask yourself

• Do you respect them and their career path?
• Do they excel in an area that you are interested in learning?
• Can they commit the time that you need?
Mentorship may require a team

• No 1 person has everything that you need

• May need separate mentors for different aspects
  – Clinical Expertise
  – Research Methods
  – Work/Life Balance

• Time is precious
use the mentor’s time to focus on what they do best
Mentorship is a Partnership
What is the Ideal Mentee?

- Enthusiastic
- Knows what they want
- Communicates needs
- Good follow through
- Accepts failure
- Responds well to feedback
Why Do Mentor-Mentee Relationships Fail?

• **Mentor**
  
  ✓ Overly critical
  ✓ Inadequate direction
  ✓ Taking ownership of research, grants, publications, patents
  ✓ Not enough time or interest
Why Do Mentor-Mentee Relationships Fail?

• **Mentee**
  
  ✓ Not communicating needs to mentor
  ✓ Lacking respect for the mentor
  ✓ Not following through with work

You are what you do, not what you say you'll do.
How should you communicate with your mentor?

• Schedule regular meetings

• Have an agenda/plan

• If you need feedback - send it a few days before

• Bring an update on what you discussed last time

• Remember deadlines are for the final product
  – Abstracts – 2 weeks
  – Papers – 1 month
Success in academic surgery requires Sponsorship

- Public support by a powerful, influential person for the advancement and promotion of an individual within whom he or she sees untapped or unappreciated leadership talent or potential

- They “open doors”
Finding an Effective Sponsor

• Need to be in a position of power to open doors for you
• They need to believe in you and know that you will deliver
• You have to prove your value to them through performance
Mentorship vs. Sponsorship

• **Mentor**: Helps you navigate your career choices and decisions

• **Sponsor**: uses influence to help you obtain opportunities

• Your MENTOR may also serve as a SPONSOR
1. Know what you are looking for from a Mentor
2. Find a mentor that no only has the expertise you need but that you respect
3. You may need more than 1 mentor
4. If your mentor can’t function as a sponsor, you need to find a sponsor
5. Work to be the ideal mentee
Thank You!

Questions?

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