

## NAVIGATING MENTORSHIP OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN INDIA: THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

Mentoring under graduate medical students is not easy as it appears to be. In India as elsewhere, selection to medical course i.e., MBBS is highly competitive with 1:400 ratio of competing students. Therefore, it can be surmised that entrants are well read, computer savvy and language erudite. If they need mentoring that should be done by qualified mentors possessing inclination and virtue of a mentor. A mentor just cannot fool one and all medical mentees. Therefore, there should be an established process of mentoring in which the students should be free to question and raise doubts. It should be a two way channel. With important apex national bodies like Human resource development (HRD), medical Council of India (MCI), University Grants Commission (UGC), Indian Medical Association (IMA) etc., the mentor must take the task seriously and goal oriented.

**Keywords:** MBBS students mentoring, assessment of mentor, assessment of mentee, mentoring tools

### INTRODUCTION

**[A] What is mentorship? The earliest quotable instance:**

Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of English Language, ed. 2013, has defined mentor to be a "wise and trusted monitor or advisor". Etymologically, its roots can be traced to "Ödyssey" in which Odysseus appointed a guardian and mentor to his son Telemachus before he departed for the Trojan War. Later, upon his safe return from war after meandering for the next ten years at sea he found that there were several suitors to his wife Penelope. Natural justice prevailed and he, assisted by his son managed to kill all the suitors. It is ironical that out of many war veterans who perished after Trojan War, he alone survived and melted into a happy re-union with his

family.

It raises a fairly reasonable and logical question. Did it all happen because of good mentoring of his son and selection of an appropriate mentor?

The author of this article having been an undergraduate medical student himself feel immersed deep into the undergraduate's need and desire of being mentored. Therefore, I would like to put forth several aspects of mentoring which a student would aspire for herself/himself. Momentarily I have donned the mantle of spokesperson for all the student community of my ilk. I feel that if the students' emotions, sensibilities and desires are taken into consideration, mentoring would become a relishing

activity and life-long experience. It is as if a foetus which has remained cuddled inside the multiple layers of darkness has suddenly emerged radiating with positivity into the illuminating world of challenges.

### **[B] Qualities in a mentor**

1. The mentor may be able to render quality time to the mentees. The diurnal time of a student is divided into four phases: morning- radiating time phase; afternoon- drooping phase; evening- exhilarating phase, and night- sleep phase. Therefore, the best time to tap attention, concentration and reciprocation of the students would be the morning phase. Generally this is the time when the students are engaged in classroom teaching and clinical duties. However, on allotted days morsel of time may be pinched out for mentoring and counselling of students rendering mentoring to be a part of studies.
2. A mentor being a member of society himself/herself may have its own share of worries. Therefore, such a mentor may be looking askance in mental perimeter and may not be concentrating whole heartedly towards the problem(s) of mentees. I would suggest that the mentor may fully concentrate during interacting phase with the students. On such occasions the mentor may gently shove his own problem aside 1.
3. It is said that the body speaks with more clarity than the tongue. A fidgeting body inspires the least confidence among the mentees. Distraction of any sort, whether ringing of mobile phones or friends of mentors barging inside may lower the receptivity in the mentees and may violently clank the chain of concentration. Similarly, compassion would nurture an instantaneous bonding of love and confidence in the mentees. Such a quality in the mentor is destined to succeed.

### **[C] Tools of monitoring**

1. Confidence building: Frequent meetings with the

mentor would foster strong bonding and would prove to be catalyst to cement interpersonal relationship. For this purpose, team meetings, one-on-one meetings, social outings and excursion tours may be arranged. All these are enhancement factors that greases out fear and forbids inhibition and diffidence 2.

2. Colouring the canvas of campus life: Students being novices in the vastness of institutions' campus needs right guidance, etiquettes and protection from insalubrious elements prevailing in the campus generally. This can only happen when the confidence between mentor and mentee shuttle to and fro unhampered 3. In this particular aspect the authors hope that the mentor needs to be extremely foamy capable of absorbing others problems with respect to his / her own.

### **[D] Assessment of mentorship**

In an open system of mentor-mentee relationship enough latitude may be provided to allow the mentee to assess the mentorship process in totality. Initiation of assessment should be made by the mentor himself and he / she should have enough wrathless courage to take up criticism and unskein the same. This is how the mentorship would be strengthened. San dout for succeeding sessions this would prove beneficial and eliminate banality.

### **[E] Conclusion**

In the present times of cut-throat competition and idolisation of success there is tremendous pressure upon the students to succeed in examinations. Few students may score high by adopting under-cutting means. To lead a normal life equipped with proper and ethical life-leading tools it is essential that both mentor and mentee must understand their duty and responsibility. Life's barricading should be removed to open the path and allow everything that is healthy for the body and soul.

We feel that similar to other international observance of events of importance, the "World Mentoring Day" may be commemorated every year. In this way each and every aspect glued to mentoring shall be brought

out in to the open. This would be discussed all over the world cutting aside political and cultural influences. Such a relationship would be given a fillip. We propose that 5th September may be observed the “WMD”, which is the date of birth, i.e., 5 September 1988 of late President of India Shri Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Ironically, “WMD” abbreviated form is associated with all the wrong reasons i.e., Weapons of Mass Destruction. As challengers of past systems and movers for reforms now “WMD” for World Mentoring Day would amend some man-made calamity.

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