
Mentoring in Medicine

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Several weeks ago I was assigned two interns to be my mentees in the mentoring program of the hospital I work in. Having a mentee to me is a big responsibility. What more to have two!

A mentor, as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary is someone who teaches or gives help and advice to a less experienced and often younger person. Being a mentor in that hospital formalized what I do and what I like to do.

More often than not I discuss with house staff cases I see: the infectious disease problem or even the general medicine problem. The residents sometimes refer to what I do as a mini-revalida, no structured questioning and no patient chosen beforehand, no part one and part two, no performance of physical examination, without repercussion on their training. I teach them medicine or even give advice about life in general. Some of the trainees probably appreciate what I do that they get me to be godparent at their wedding. Mentoring in a private community hospital is much different from mentoring in a university-based hospital because of the differences in the educational background of trainees in the former. Trainees in a university hospital usually are products of the medical school attached to that hospital .. I have to keep an open mind and have different expectations of what trainees in the community hospital know and what they do.

Patience is a virtue that is often required of mentors along with diligence... Dedicating time to discussing the history of the patient's illness, physical examination and the assessment and plan of management. Oftentimes, I search for articles pertinent to the case and share it with trainees.

I probably take mentoring seriously because of my experience with my mentors in medical school. My mentors include my parents. They were supportive and taught me a lot about medicine and life. Giving a lecture and having students as mentees sitting in a classroom and listening to one lecture is one kind of mentoring. One neurology professor of mine stands out. His lectures were so stimulating and lively that no one ever fell asleep during his lectures. He was amiable and approachable, traits that exhausted and sleep deprived medical students value. Another kind of mentoring would be a one on one relationship that would be conducted in the ward's bedside or clinics with a real live patient in front of me and my mentee.

My consultants in residency and fellowship treated us trainees as their coequals and allowed us to call them by their first names; even one who was a co-author or a textbook used globally. Truly, far removed from the hierarchical culture I was used to here in our country.

It is my hope that in turn my mentees develop the same love of teaching and pass on what they learn to mentees of their own. To be inspired to teach by one's mentors and to inspire one's mentees to teach would probably be an apt catchphrase.