

## Mentoring in Pharmacy Education and Practice

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Several universities have established mentoring programs to help faculty members develop the various skills needed for their career's development and growth. It has been stressed that the development of an effective mentoring program at any institution is a core component of enhancing its culture of teaching and scholarship, and ensuring the success of its academicians [1].

In most colleges of pharmacy it is a common duty that an academic practice the profession by focusing on teaching, research, and community services. These activities are the pillars of the career of the faculty as an academician. They are taken into account for renewal of contract and promotion. Academic advising is part of the role of the teacher, it encompasses following the student's progress and advising on his/her plan of study and attending to the student's problems with the registration of courses. The burden of academic advising comes usually from a limited number of students who are not doing well with their study and although the relationship between an advisor and advisee continues until the latter graduate, it is always restricted to the aforementioned duties.

Preceptors carry out different mission of training students and supervising their pharmacy practice usually in small groups or on one-on-one basis at the site of training. The relationship between preceptors and students lasts for only the period of training which is rather short to allow for assuming any mentorship role. Mentoring relationship has been defined as the "naturally formed, one-on-one, mutual, committed, nonsexual relationship between a junior and senior person designed to promote personal and professional development beyond any particular curricular or institutional goals" [2].

Such a relationship can be between a faculty and a student, a senior faculty and a junior less experienced or a newly recruited faculty or a senior professional e.g. pharmacist and a less experienced colleague. We all, as academicians and professionals, assume both the roles of a mentor and a mentee on daily basis in a non-organized fashion.

To actively practice the role of a mentor for undergraduate students, junior pharmacists or junior academic colleagues, the role requires the ability of the mentor to find time for his/her mentee, be trustworthy, have a passion for helping others, be a motivator, listen confidentially to their problems and enquiries, love to lighten their paths and helping them by sharing his /her personal, academic, and career knowledge and experience. Simply mentoring is guiding with great passion to share and care with the aim to develop the personality, skills and ethical and professional performance of the mentee. A mentor often has a great impact on the progress of his/her mentee, and mentees always remember mentors who made a difference in their academic, professional and also personal development. Moreover such a positive experience of the mentee would enforce in him/her the mentorship spirit to adopt the role of a mentor with others.

For a profitable and successful mentoring relationship, the mentees, on the other hand, must also be honest, willing to be open about their potentials and limitations and willing to accept the guidance of the experienced mentor in all aspects of their life that is subjected to discussion with their mentors.

Mentoring relationship is of mutual benefit and the concerns, experiences, and obstacles faced by a mentee would certainly add to the knowledge of a mentor and enhances his/her power to intervene properly with similar situations.

In addition, questions and queries raised by a mentee would either/enforce an unintentionally neglected aspect of practice, improve or update an area of knowledge or point at an area that is worth investigating.

Stressing on the role of peer mentor to pharmacy students, it is worth noting that students can also play such a role among themselves. More experienced seniors can act as mentors for newly enrolled junior students at least with regard to the daily life at the college and university campus, study plan of the college, registration of courses, extracurricular activities, academic advising and examinations. With regard to faculty at a college, it must be remembered that not all faculty can be mentors but those who are interested, can be trained as part of faculty department programs to enable them to effectively assume such a role.

Barriers to appropriate mentoring include, among others, time constraints, taking advantage of mentee, forcing authority on rather than motivating a mentee, differences or lack of chemistry between the mentor and mentee and lack of proper mentoring skills [3]. Such barriers usually lead to dysfunctional mentoring relationship and have negative impact on the mentee.

On the other hand many strategies can be adopted to improve mentoring relationship. These include training and education [3,4], fostered relationship through regular mentoring meetings, and progress reports [3,5], listing available mentors and allowing mentees the right for personal identification of their mentors [3,5], rewarding effective mentors [6].

Mentoring outcomes have to be regularly assessed by performance progress of mentors and mentees, periodical reports of mentors and peer evaluation. It is also recommended that universities lacking such activities should develop mentoring programs as an essential part of faculty development and continuing education plans. Moreover, recognition is important through rewarding incentives and can be achieved by considering mentoring activities in renewal of contracts, promotion or in annual awards for efficient mentors to continue effective mentoring.

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