

LETTER TO EDITOR**The role of mentorship in Emergency Medicine**

Kashif Ijaz Malik

Authors Affiliation:Addenbrookes Hospital,
Cambridge University
Hospitals, UK**Correspondence to:**

kashifijazmalik@gmail.com

Dear Sir,

Mentoring is gaining traction in the world of medicine for some years now and rightly so. In competitive fields like sports, it has proven to be very effective in both harnessing the unique capabilities of a Mentee and in also unleashing their true potential. In the field of medicine, with an ever-increasing rate of burnout amongst doctors, the traditional work-based relationships and the more formal relationship between a supervisor and a trainee is felt to be ineffective in promoting an open exchange of ideas and emotions for doctors who may be searching for individualized answers to their special circumstances or predicament. This need is increasingly being filled, with success, by mentorship schemes amongst doctors.^(1, 2)

UK deaneries are promoting voluntary mentorship by pairing up senior trainees to junior trainees, to help them navigate the maze of training. This has been exceptionally useful for trainees in Emergency Medicine because of the high intensity of our field. I have personally found invaluable information from my mentors during my career in Emergency Medicine.^(2, 3) They can not only direct you towards good examination resources but also guide you in crucial decisions regarding your medical training or career. A lot of times, the mere assurance and validation that what you are feeling or going through is not unique, can prove critical in getting you out of the rabbit hole of despair. The confidentiality clause in mentorship means that both the mentor and mentee can speak openly about work/training problems, without feeling that they may be reported or reprimanded. This free and open space is crucial in mentorship, but also requires that those involved, must adhere to good professional standards. This means that if either the mentee or the mentor feels that they cannot continue in this mentoring relationship; they can simply end it with a simple email without giving any reason. The “no blame divorce” clause means that no one must be made to justify the reason for them to end a voluntary

mentoring relationship. Both individuals are then free to pair up with other doctors without any blame.

If you wish to start a mentoring scheme in your department, you should first try to float the idea around to your trainee doctors to see if they feel that this would be useful to them. Remember that this is a voluntary relationship and only a group interest can make this a success.⁽⁴⁾ Ask the senior trainees to write a paragraph giving information about themselves that may be interesting to a junior. The juniors then get to rate their interest in who they would like to pair with. The organizer then pairs the mentor and mentee based on their preference list. Usually, it is expected that the mentor and mentee meet for an hour every two months to keep each other updated. This meeting can be online or in a physical place depending upon convenience. The agenda of these meetings must be set by a mentee, as it is their needs and concerns that need to be discussed.⁽⁵⁾ This is important to remember, because the mentor does not have a personal agenda, but acts a ‘wise guide’ to help the mentee have a better journey in the land of emergency medicine. It is also advisable that while personal problems impacting a doctor’s performance may be shared, the mentor does not feel that they are responsible for solving them; the relationship should be maintained within expected professional standards. Some advocate having a written contract of what the expectations are and keeping notes of meetings – this can be left to individual preferences, however; it is always helpful to keep a record of agreed actions in a meeting so that they may be re discussed in the future.

I feel that mentorship is a great semi-formal way to get a much-needed senior to guide you in achieving your goals. Give it a try if you feel it will help you and your department too. If you wish to learn about mentoring, you can access the mentee and mentor area of the NHS trust and learn more.⁽⁶⁾

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