

Outcomes of a Structured Hospitalist Peer Mentoring Program
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Background: Hospitalist programs are often challenged with decreasing physician turnover while adding new physicians to meet hospital growth needs. In addition, newly hired physicians can have significant challenges integrating into a new hospitalist group and hospital. Mentoring programs for new physicians may help alleviate some of these challenges. The Duke-Durham Regional Hospitalist program experienced both high turnover and program growth during 2006-2007 and as a result implemented a structured peer mentoring program for newly hired physicians and physician assistants. The goals of the mentoring program were to improve teamwork, encourage hospitalist medicine as a career, improve mentor confidence and influence, and speed up onboarding of new hospitalists.

Methods: The hospitalist director assigned newly hired hospitalist “mentees” to experienced “mentors” based on shared interests. The mentors received formal training on successful mentoring skills. Each pair was asked to meet regularly. The hospitalist program administration generated monthly reminders for the meetings. After two years, the hospitalist director initiated a cross sectional survey of mentors and mentees to assess mentoring outcomes. The study was approved by the institutional review board.

Results: Respondents included 24 physicians and 2 physician assistants. 79% (15/19) of mentees and 85% (11/13) of mentors completed the survey. The average duration of the mentoring relationships was 10 months with 3.96 meetings. The commonly discussed topics were hospitalist program issues (84.6%), hospital specific issues (53.8%), specialist issues (53.8%), challenging patients (42.3%), and career issues (42.3%). Mentees reported their mentors modeled the following behaviors (percent answering yes): exhibited effective listening (93.3%), shared personal experiences and insights (86.7%), were supportive (80%), showed genuine interest in their mentee (80%), helped understand hospitalist program operations (80%). Both mentors and mentees were generally satisfied with the pairing process (mean score 4.0 on Likert scale 1-5). Mentors were satisfied with the formal training process (mean score 4.45 on Likert scale 1-5). Mentors also reported some improvement in sense of influence and confidence as a result of participating in the program (both questions mean score 3.5 on Likert scale 1-5). Mentors and mentees differed on their perception of the time it took to transition from mentee to colleague (mentees 3.0 months, mentors 8.1 months, $P=0.003$). 60% of mentees and 80% of mentors reported satisfaction with the mentoring program. 71.4% of mentees and 100% of mentors reported that they planned on remaining a hospitalist for their career.

Conclusions: A structured hospitalist mentoring program can develop effective mentoring skills for mentors and positively impact workplace satisfaction of both mentors and mentees.

Author disclosures: none