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Research

Assessment of mentor involvement with pharmacy students pursuing post-graduate residency training[☆]

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Abstract

Purpose: To assess graduating pharmacy students' perceptions of mentorship received during pharmacy school when pursuing post-graduate residency training (PGRT).

Methods: A survey was emailed to all Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) accredited schools of pharmacy inviting graduating pharmacy students pursuing PGRT to evaluate aspects of mentorship. The 18-item survey instrument contained five sections: satisfaction with mentorship in various areas (e.g., interview preparation and selecting programs for application), importance of mentorship, amount of mentorship desired, mentorship programs, and match process results. Incomplete surveys were excluded from analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize responses while Chi-square and Fisher's exact tests were used to compare responses from the matched and non-matched groups. Additionally, regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the students' match results with satisfaction in various areas of mentorship.

Results: Complete surveys were received from 268 students attending 39 schools of pharmacy. Students ranked curriculum vita (CV) preparation and establishing residency rank list as the most and least important mentorship activities, respectively. Compared with non-matched students, matched students found mentorship with CV preparation ($p = 0.02$) and selecting programs to apply to ($p = 0.01$) significantly more important. In addition, matched students were more satisfied with mentorship on CV preparation (85% vs. 71%, $p = 0.02$), interviewing (71% vs. 38%, $p < 0.001$), residency recruitment at meetings preparation (76% vs. 59%, $p = 0.03$) and selecting programs to apply to (71% vs. 39%, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: Graduating pharmacy students pursuing PGRT were most satisfied with CV and residency recruitment at meetings preparation, and along with interview preparation, ranked them as most important.

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Keywords: Post-graduate residency training; Pharmacy residency; Mentor; Protégé; Match

[☆] Abbreviations that may not be standard in the field: PGRT: post-graduate residency training.

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Introduction

In the 2002 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AAPC) report on the role of colleges and schools of pharmacy in residency training, recommendation

14 describes promoting residency training and providing mentoring to pharmacy students, particularly those who have shown an interest and aptitude in becoming future faculty.¹ In 2008, schools of pharmacy were surveyed with regard to the preparation they provided students interested in pursuing post-graduate residency training (PGRT). Of the 71 colleges responding, 16 provided a structured, formalized program to promote residency training and nine of those 16 provided a description of their program. Of those nine schools of pharmacy, only one listed a mentorship program. Understandably, numerous challenges exist for mentorship programs, including a lack of literature evaluating the benefits of specific mentoring activities that would help prioritize faculty time.²

Rationale and objectives

Mentorship is the mutually beneficial relationship established between a mentor and a protégé. Classically the more experienced and presumably wiser mentor assists in meeting the professional needs of the less experienced protégé with the extent of transferred knowledge and expertise dependent on the depth and breadth of the mentor–protégé relationship.^{3,4} Mentoring programs have been shown to promote professionalism as pharmacy students make the transition to becoming pharmacists⁵; however, quantitative studies on the perception of specific mentoring tasks are lacking. The objective of this study was to assess graduating pharmacy students' satisfaction with and perceived value of mentor involvement while pursuing PGRT.

Materials and methods

A survey was developed to evaluate the mentorship experience of graduating pharmacy students pursuing PGRT. During development of the survey questions, four pharmacists who were not members of the research team and the student investigator (ML) piloted the survey to provide feedback regarding clarity and appropriateness of survey items and to estimate the time to complete the survey. Changes were made if two or more of these individuals recommended a modification or deletion of a survey item. A final review by the investigators was then conducted to confirm that all queries met the research objectives.

The final 18-item survey instrument contained five sections: (1) six questions in a 5-point Likert-scale format (1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree) on satisfaction with mentorship in various areas (e.g., interview preparation and selecting programs for application), (2) a rank-order item on importance of mentorship activities (first through sixth and or not applicable), (3) a trichotomous item on amount of mentorship desired, (4) four close-ended items on mentorship programs, and (5) six open-ended items on match process results (Appendix 1). For the items related to satisfaction, “satisfaction” was defined as a

response of “agree” or “strongly agree” to a survey item. For the rank-order item, each rank could be used only once. If a focus area was ranked first through third, it was deemed “important” by the investigators. Respondents determined for themselves who served as their mentor(s) during pharmacy school for the purposes of this survey.

The survey was conducted from April 9, 2013, through May 16, 2013, a time period selected to initiate after the post-match “Scramble” process for most PGRT programs but prior to many colleges and schools of pharmacy graduation. Participation in the survey was voluntary and not associated with any requirements for graduation. The Georgia Regents Medical Center Institutional Review Board approved this study.

e-Mails were sent to Deans and department chairs at the 128 ACPE-accredited colleges or schools of pharmacy in the United States and Puerto Rico regarding their interest in participating in this study. Once the investigators received a reply expressing a willingness to participate, a subsequent e-mail with instructions and the hyperlink connecting to the survey was sent. The instructions requested that the Deans/department chairs electronically distribute an invitation to participate to all pharmacy students graduating in 2013 who were pursuing PGRT. Participating students then completed the survey instrument on the SurveyMonkey[®] website, an online survey software and questionnaire tool. Reminder e-mails were sent to Deans/department chairs at the 39 programs that responded every two weeks throughout the study period.

In order to focus on the population of interest for this study, students who indicated on the survey that they did not pursue PGRT were excluded. In addition, only those students who completed the survey in full were included in the statistical analysis. Throughout the survey in instances where students provided a “not applicable” response, these specific responses were excluded prior to statistical analysis.

The primary outcome was to describe the perceived value of mentorship by pharmacy students pursuing PGRT in terms of satisfaction with mentorship, importance of mentorship and amount of mentorship desired. A secondary outcome was to compare the perceived value of mentorship in two pre-identified groups: students who matched with a PGRT program and students who went unmatched (“matched” and “non-matched,” respectively).

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize overall responses to survey items. In addition, Chi-square and Fisher's exact tests were used to compare responses by matched and non-matched groups, as appropriate. Regression analysis also was conducted to evaluate the association of match result with satisfaction in various areas of mentorship. With the expectation that students' satisfaction rankings of different areas of mentorship could potentially be highly correlated, we performed univariate logistic regression analysis on satisfaction with mentorship received in various areas vs. whether or not a student matched. Multivariate analysis was conducted to control for confounders

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