Experiences in Teaching and Learning

Pharmacy resident-led student mentoring program: A focus on developing mentoring skills

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ABSTRACT

Background and purpose: Formalized mentoring programs are often credited for influencing professional development of mentees. Unfortunately, little information exists regarding advancement of mentoring skills. We report the development and evaluation of a program to cultivate mentoring skills in pharmacy residents.

Educational activity and setting: Advanced pharmacy practice experience students and pharmacy residents were contacted for program participation. Resident mentors were paired with a student mentee for the program. Mentors were provided resources and support throughout the program. Sessions were held to facilitate mentoring relationships and to discuss professional development topics. Pre- and post-perception surveys were administered to mentors to measure changes in mentoring comfort and ability. Only matched pre- and post-surveys were included for analysis. The program was held and evaluated over two separate academic years

Findings: Fifty-three residents mentored 54 students over two cycles of the program. Mentors' matched perception surveys (n = 26) reported increased comfort in mentoring (p < 0.001), increased confidence in delivery of subjective content (p < 0.001), increased comfort in providing written and oral feedback (p = 0.013), and increased effectiveness in provision of written and oral feedback (p = 0.004 and p = 0.013 respectively). Mentors also reported heightened belief that serving as a student mentor will be beneficial to their long-term career goals (p = 0.034).

Discussion and summary: Overall, this formal resident-led student mentoring program improved resident comfort serving in a mentoring role.

Background and purpose

Mentoring, both formally and informally, is often credited for having great benefit on professional development in many health professions, including pharmacy.[1–3] The concept of mentoring dates to ancient Greece and has become a primary means for adults to gain knowledge and skills in their specific area of specialty.[4] Mentoring encourages learning and professional development and has many benefits for both the mentor and mentee. The mentor often expresses feelings of greater self-esteem and worth, improved professional

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satisfaction, and a higher standing in their organization or profession. The mentee's benefits are similar with improved professional satisfaction and increased likelihood of success, as well as gaining a smoother transition from learner to professional.[1,3] The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education Standards 2016 recognize mentorship as a factor leading to student success and also a key ability of preceptors.[5] With these benefits known, there is a growing recognition for the need of formal mentoring programs to enable students and professionals to be successful throughout their careers.

There are several pharmacy trainee mentoring programs that have been developed and evaluated in the literature.[6–8] One program that matched pre-professional and professional year pharmacy students found the majority of participants (74% of mentees and 64% of mentors) reported a favorable response to the program.[7] Similar results were found when examining research perceptions among undergraduate and pharmacy students when paired with a graduate student.[8] However, an examination of the mentor's confidence levels after the year long program demonstrated no difference. Although these identified studies show positive perceptions, especially for mentees involved in mentoring programs, one commonality amongst the studies is the lack of support provided to the mentors involved. Although one study discussed a "mentor's orientation," most literature does not indicate any formal education or guidance prior to partaking in mentoring experiences.[8,9]

In many professions, the typical mentor may be older than the mentee, providing them an increased level of experience; however, in the case of pharmacy residents and students this has not been found true.[8,9] Often, these individuals are expected to engage as preceptors and mentors shortly following training but may lack the years of experience that the typical mentor has. Little is known about how best to advance the development of mentoring skills, especially in young professionals completing post-graduate education such as pharmacy residents and fellows. Opportunities and resources to help young professionals be successful in future mentoring have not yet been explored. The objective of this study was to implement a resident-led student mentoring program and to evaluate its effect on the development of resident mentoring skills through resident perceptions.

Educational activity and setting

Program goals

This resident-led student mentoring program was developed with several goals for both resident mentors and student mentees. For resident mentors, goals were to develop mentoring skills, increase familiarity with mentoring resources, and provide the opportunity to work one-on-one with students. Program goals for student mentees were to increase exposure to area residents and to supplement the colleges' post-graduate education (i.e., residency and fellowship) attainment resources. Post-graduate education attainment was an emphasis of the program as it provided a common focus for mentors to work with mentees.

Program development and implementation

The resident-led student mentoring program was implemented in summer 2014 and was offered during two separate academic years (2014–2015 and 2015–2016). Residents from Indianapolis area residency programs served as mentors and pharmacy students served as mentees. Advanced pharmacy practice experience (APPE) students participating in institutional block scheduling from Butler University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (BUCOPHS) and Purdue University College of Pharmacy were identified through college of pharmacy experiential education offices. Students in institutional block scheduling were completing multiple month-long APPE rotations at one institution, were involved in research projects at that institution, and many had an interest in post-graduate education.[10] Student mentees were contacted via email using electronic fliers for voluntary participation in the program. Indianapolis area postgraduate year-one (PGY-1) and postgraduate year-two (PGY-2) pharmacy residents were identified through residency program directors and BUCOPHS longitudinal teaching programs. Requirements, anticipated time commitment, and benefits of participating in the student mentoring program were presented to residents during a teaching orientation at the college of pharmacy. Subsequently, informational fliers were distributed to residents via email for voluntary participation in the program.

All interested students and residents were paired together based on student block scheduling site, resident practice sites, and resident and student practice interest areas. Residents were provided mentoring resources and support at the beginning of the program and routinely throughout. During the first formal program session of each academic year, which was separate from the teaching orientation, residents were provided with instruction on what a mentor-mentee relationship entails, the type of support to provide students, provision of feedback, the benefits of mentoring for both mentors and mentees, and the purpose and expectations of the program. Additional resources provided included handouts from pharmacy professional organizations and other academic organizations on the value of mentoring, developing and maintaining mentoring relationships, delivering feedback, and useful questions and discussions for guiding mentees.[3,11] Routine emails were sent as a supplementary resource for all resident mentors throughout the program, which provided additional mentoring tips as well as timely example questions and discussion points to utilize with student mentees.

Regarding student programing, six sessions (three live and three asynchronous) were held during each academic year on approximately a monthly basis to facilitate mentor-mentee relationships and to formally discuss various mentoring and professional development topics (Table 1). Sessions were led by one to two resident mentors participating in the program who demonstrated interest. Each session was held on a single date and led by different resident mentors participating in the program who were responsible for developing the presentation and materials (print and audiovisual). The session structure included a brief presentation based on published resources and experience (approximately 30 min) followed by additional time for one-on-one interaction between mentor pairs. The online, asynchronous sessions were conducted during busy months (holidays, professional meeting times, etc.) so the mentor and mentee could view the presentation and agree on a mutual date and time to meet and discuss further. Overall, session content and materials remained consistent from year to year with