

# A Pilot Study to Introduce Mentoring to 1<sup>st</sup>-year Medical Students at a Private Medical College in Eastern India

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The stress of a difficult medical course, emotional immaturity, and acclimating to unfamiliar surroundings is all issues that new medical students encounter. As a result, a mentorship program was established to assist them in their academic and personal growth.

**Aims and Objectives:** The purpose of this study is to introduce and assess mentors' and mentees' perspectives on mentorship programs.

**Materials and Methods:** For First Professional students in the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (M.B.B.S) degree, a mentorship program was created. To sensitize the professors, a 1-day session was held. Mentors were volunteered by 17 faculty members from diverse areas. Following the sensitization, 150 MBBS first professional students were randomly assigned to these faculty members. The mentor organized a regular visit with the mentees. A validated and semi-structured feedback questionnaire was used to assess mentors and mentees' perceptions at the conclusion of the mentorship program. Students participated in a focus group discussion. **Results:** The feedback survey was completed by 114 students and 17 faculty members. This program was beneficial to the mentors' self-improvement, teaching, and communication abilities. The majority of mentees reported that the program aided them emotionally and academically. It was an excellent technique to foster a positive student-teacher relationship. The mentorship program was well received by both mentors and mentees. **Conclusion:** Mentorship programs, which were recently implemented, aided in the overall growth of mentors and mentees. This program was highly well received by both mentors and mentees, who saw it as an effective intervention.

**Keywords:** Medical students, Mentee, Mentor, Mentorship program

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important variables that contribute to students' success in pursuing higher professional degree programs is effective academic and psychological assistance.<sup>[1]</sup> Medical schools have mentoring programs in place to provide students with assistance and guidance to help them have a rewarding undergraduate medical experience.<sup>[2]</sup> This program aids students in their academic pursuits and gives them a technique to cope with the challenges of a new setting.<sup>[3]</sup> Mentoring benefits can be evident in three primary areas of the institution: mentees, mentors, and the medical school community. The advantages that this program provides to mentees are related to their professional development; it piques their interest in research and motivates them to better their grades. It also helps them emotionally and reduces stress by strengthening their bonds with their mentors. Mentors gain as well as this program gives them a sense of accomplishment, improves their teaching abilities, and so aids in personal development. Furthermore, the medical school community benefits since clinical care, research, and teaching are all improved.<sup>[4]</sup> As a result, the purpose of this study was to introduce and assess the perspectives of mentees and mentors on the mentorship program.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The experiment was carried out with 1<sup>st</sup>-year medical students from the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (M.B.B.S) program. A one-day workshop on mentorship program was organized to educate the principal, senior teachers from several departments, members of the curriculum committee, and the Medical Education Unit (M.E.U). Following the workshop, a feedback questionnaire was completed. The mentorship program

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was created by M.E.U members after significant consideration. Seventeen clinical, preclinical, and paraclinical faculty members consented to participate in this study. A lottery system was used to divide 150 1<sup>st</sup>-year students among 17 faculty members. Mentor meetings for mentees were held twice a month and were mandatory. Other than regular mentor meetings, several mentees also contacted their mentors. The mentors' log books were kept up to date, and there was a 15-day review meeting with the M.E.U Coordinator and the Principal. During the meeting, a variety of topics were discussed, as well as possible remedies.

## RESULTS

### Questionnaire Development

By researching the literature, the feedback questionnaires for both mentors and mentees were created, with a focus on the areas of mentorship program. During a series of collaborative talks among the authors, the questions were evaluated and amended. There were open-ended and closed-ended questions, both of which were validated by M.E.U members and external sources.

### Collection of Feedback

Mentees and mentors provided questionnaire-based feedback 6 months after the mentorship program was launched. Twelve mentees were chosen using the random number generator in SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 17.0, to provide feedback based on focus group discussion (FGD) (Chicago: SPSS Inc.).

### Statistical Analysis

SPSS software version 17.0 was used to do statistical analysis on the data. Validated semi-structured surveys were collected

from both mentors and mentees to evaluate the program's success. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire collected from the mentees were assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient test. Cronbach's alpha was 0.86, indicating that the questionnaire's substance was satisfactory. The data's mean and standard deviation were statistically examined. The median scores for each of the questionnaire's individual items were also determined. For qualitative data, descriptive analysis was used.

### Output

The 1<sup>st</sup>-year MBBS students were given the opportunity to participate in a mentoring program. The feedback questionnaire was completed by 114 of the 150 first professional MBBS students of either gender who took part in the mentorship program. The remaining students were not present on the day of the feedback form collection [Tables 1-3]. The feedback questionnaire was completed by 17 of the 18 faculty members who volunteered to be a part of the mentorship program. One faculty member was on sabbatical and was unable to complete the form [Tables 4-6]. Two FGD sessions were conducted, each with six students, and 14 items were identified [Table 7].

## DISCUSSION

Mentoring is a concept that can be traced back to Greek mythology. First-year medical students come from a safe school setting, where there are fewer students in each class and they have spent time with individuals from similar social and cultural backgrounds. When they enroll in medical school, they become lost in a sea of students from various backgrounds; these students are subjected to the stress of a demanding medical curriculum, peer pressure, and emotional immaturity. As a result, it is critical to intervene and establish a mentoring program to this vulnerable group.<sup>[5]</sup> The goal of this study was to launch a mentorship program in the 1<sup>st</sup> year and examine how mentees and mentors felt about it. The findings imply that the mentees were driven to enhance their academic performance and felt encouraged in their personal growth.

This finding was in line with the findings of Kalén *et al.*,<sup>[6]</sup> who found that having a mentor was beneficial to most students in terms of both professional and personal growth. Similar findings

**Table 1:** Mean response of closed-ended questions given by mentees

Questions	Mean±SD	Median
My mentor is available and accessible to me	4.33±0.88	5.00
My mentor communicates regularly with me	3.73±1.03	4.00
My mentor is supportive	4.37±0.72	4.00
My mentor encourages and motivates me	4.35±0.69	4.00
My mentor supports me emotionally	4.01±0.84	4.00
My mentor suggests appropriate recourses and ideas to improve my studies	4.19±0.78	4.00
I will keep in touch with my mentor for my future personal and professional development activities	4.11±0.74	4.00
I want to continue with the same mentor for the next session	4.07±1.03	4.00
My mentor has motivated me for peer mentoring	3.54±1.01	4.00
I will volunteer for peer mentoring	3.73±1.00	4.00
Mentorship program is needed for welfare of the students	4.46±0.63	5.00

\*Likert scale used was: Strongly agree: 5, Agree: 4, Neither yes nor no: 3, Disagree: 2, Strongly disagree: 1, SD: Standard deviation

**Table 2:** Perception of mentees on mentorship program – closed-ended questions (n=114)

Questions	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither agrees nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
My mentor is accessible to me	53.55	34.81	3.56	8.03	0
My mentor is available to me	21.42	48.21	12.5	16.95	0.88
My mentor communicates regularly with me	49.10	41.05	8.04	1.78	0
My mentor motivates me for curricular activities	46.43	43.75	8.94	0.88	0
My mentors supports me emotionally	31.26	44.64	18.75	5.36	0
My mentor suggests appropriate resources and ideas to improve my studies	37.6	49.11	9.82	2.68	0.89
I will keep in touch with my mentor for my future personal and professional development	32.12	50.88	14.28	2.67	0
I want to continue with the same mentor for the next session	46.42	27.67	16.06	8.02	1.79
My mentor has motivated me for peer mentoring	18.77	37.6	25.88	16.96	0.89
I will volunteer for peer mentoring	20.52	46.41	21.42	8.02	3.57
Mentorship program is needed for the welfare of the students	55.35	38.38	5.35	0.88	0

**Table 3:** Perception of mentees on mentorship program – open-ended questions (n=114)

Questions	Responses	Percentage
Two things you like about the mentorship program	Interactive	2.18
	Problems can be discussed with teachers	42.61
	Emotional support	21.32
	Build confidence	12.04
	Helpful in studies	13.67
	Builds strong teacher–student relationship	7.1
Two things you would like to improve about the mentorship program	Hostel issues	1.07
	Action taken to solve the problem	4.68
	Dedicated time for mentorship program	55.13
Overall evaluation of mentorship program	One-to-one mentoring	10.29
	Friendly environment should be there in mentor and mentee	16.81
	Clinical teachers should not be a mentor	8.40
	Peer mentoring	4.66
Overall evaluation of mentorship program	Excellent	55.76
	very good	24.79
	Good	19.48
	Average	0
	Not good	0

**Table 4:** Mean response of closed-ended questions given by mentors

Questions	Mean±SD	Median
Mentorship program promotes better teacher–student relationship	4.37±0.39	5
My mentee communicates regularly with me	3.93±0.28	4
I anticipate an extended future relationship with my mentee	4.32±0.48	4
Mentorship program is an extra burden on me	1.57±0.68	1.5
I would like to volunteer as a mentor for future batches	4.59±0.68	5

**Table 5 :** Perception of mentors on mentorship program – closed-ended questions (n=17)

Questions	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither agrees nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Mentorship program promotes better teacher–student relationship	83.34	16.68	0	0	0
My mentee communicates regularly with me	0	91.69	8.34	0	0
I anticipate an extended future relationship with my mentee	33.34	66.68	0	0	0
Mentorship program is an extra burden on me	0	0	8.34	41.68	50
I would like to volunteer as a mentor for future batches	66.69	25	8.34	0	0

**Table 6:** Perception of mentors on mentorship program – open-ended questions (n=17)

Questions	Responses	%	
What is going well in the mentorship program?	Students get comfortable and confident	21.87	
	Students discuss problems	28.13	
	Increases focus on studies	12.6	
	Strong teacher–student relation	21.88	
	Satisfaction to help	9.39	
	Self-improvement	6.27	
What challenges have you confronted in the mentorship program?	No dedicated time	22.74	
	Hesitation to discuss problems	45.46	
	Time taken to build confidence with mentees	31.81	
What are the changes you identified in yourself as a result of this mentorship program	Self-satisfaction	17.23	
	Better understanding or empathy	37.92	
	Increased communication skills	31.01	
	Increased teaching skills	13.78	
Any other suggestions	Same mentees throughout academic tenure	10	
	Regular feedback	30	
	Dedicated time	30	
	Mentees must be properly sensitized	30	
	Overall evaluation of mentorship program	Excellent	41.69
	Very good	25	
Good	33.34		
Average	0		
Not good	0		

were observed by Usmani *et al.*, who found that mentorship programs enhanced communication between mentors and mentees, allowing mentees to communicate their difficulties with mentors in a non-threatening environment,<sup>[7]</sup> who stated that mentees and mentors have become more friendly, allowing mentees to easily communicate their concerns. Mentors indicated that the program offered them a sense of accomplishment, and that they were able to improve their teaching skills as a result of the feedback, they received from their mentees. They also indicated that they could comprehend the challenges that the pupils were having, which helped them create more empathy for them. Bhatia *et al.*<sup>[3]</sup> found that mentors become more aware of their students’ concerns and were better able to empathize with them.

During a FGD, one mentee said, “My mentor is like a second mother to me,” while others said that their mentor helped them overcome their inferiority issue, implying that mentors were offering emotional support. This curriculum aided in the development of a more positive teacher–student connection. The present study’s drawbacks were that the mentorship program could not be introduced at the start of the session; as a result, the students want mentors of their choosing and were uncomfortable with mentors from higher classes. Furthermore, we were unable to get a designated time slot for the mentorship program in the calendar, making it difficult for both mentors and mentees to schedule sessions.

**Table 7:** Items identified through content analysis of focus group discussion

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Item</i>
Need for a mentor at the time of joining the institute	Coming from a nonmedical background, I was lost initially as I could not take guidance from my family also Even though I am not a hosteller, I needed someone to guide me Initially, I had hostel problems and I was homesick, so needed help I needed a mentor to cope up with social and cultural differences I had a mentor in my previous classes so wanted one who could give me guidance for my studies
Acceptability of the allotment method	I am happy with the allotment of mentors through lottery system I wanted to be with the mentor of my choice
Benefits of the mentorship program	I could openly discuss my problems with my mentor be it personal or professional I could get guidance from my mentor for some issues which I could not discuss with my parents My mentor offered me carrier counseling It helped me to develop a better relationship with my mentor My mentor helped me regarding preparation of subjective questions as we were more oriented toward objective questions My mentor was like a second mother to me My mentor helped me overcome my inferiority complex, I had regarding my looks My mentor helped me with time management during my final exams My mentor helped me to cope up with the stress of final examinations
Any suggestions for improvement	There should be a dedicated time for mentoring One-to-one mentoring should be there Mentor should call me more frequently I want to be with the same mentor I was initially uncomfortable with the mentor of higher classes My mentor from clinical department did not give me enough time
Views regarding peer mentoring	We want to volunteer for peer mentoring
Satisfaction from this program	Satisfied with the mentorship program, want to continue with the same mentor in our next class also Want to have a mentor from the same professional year

## CONCLUSION

Finally, the mentorship program was implemented among 1<sup>st</sup>-year MBBS students. Mentors' teaching skills increased as a result of this program, and the program also aided in the development of a better student-teacher connection. Mentors developed an empathic perspective on the challenges that their mentees encountered. This program established the way for future peer mentoring, which will help incoming batches adjust to their new surroundings. The mentorship program was well received by both mentors and mentees.

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