Peer Mentoring in Health Professions Education: A Pilot Study

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Peer Mentoring in Health Professions Education Programs

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Learning Outcomes

1. Appreciate the benefits and limitations of peer mentoring in health professions programs.

2. Learn which aspects of peer mentoring are most and least valued.

3. Consider strategies to develop or improve peer mentoring programs in educational and clinical settings.
Challenges

• Increasing OT program enrollment.
• More first generation college students.
• Increased competency requirements (students)
• Increased productivity pressures (faculty)
Purpose

Examine the experiences of peer mentors and mentees in an occupational therapy education program in Northern California.
Research Questions

1. What is the experience of peer mentoring like for peer mentors?

2. What is the experience of peer mentoring like for peer mentees?

3. How does participation in a structured peer mentoring program contribute to professional identity development?
Review of Literature

Mentoring definition: “A relationship between a more expert or senior individual and a less educated individual, with the goal being to improve the career or education of the individual.” (Anderson & Shannon, 1998).

Peer mentoring: “A specialized form of mentoring that provides positive feedback, guidance, and support to the mentee, while facilitating professional development in mentors.” (cite).
Peer Mentor Programs

1. Medicine
2. Nursing
3. Speech Therapy
4. Physical Therapy
5. Occupational Therapy
Key Concepts

1. Learning Communities: Lave and Wenger
2. Role Modeling and Self-Efficacy: Bandura
3. Accurate Empathy: Rogers
4. Professional Identity Development: Erickson
Study Design

• Non-experimental, mixed methods
• Quantitative: original survey
• Qualitative:
  • Open-ended questions on survey
  • Reflection paper (mentors only)
Participants

• OT students at private university in No Ca.
• IRB/PHS approval obtained
• N=104: 52 mentor mentee pairs
  • Mentors: Third year majors (GR)
  • Mentees: First year majors (UG and GR)
Data Collection Instruments

1. Original survey of mentoring experience.
   • Likert scale (1-5), 16 questions
   • Two qualitative questions: benefits from program, suggestions for improvement

2. Reflection paper for class assignment
   • Mentors only
   • Reflective learning
Methodology

- Convenience sample
- Linked to course (mentors)
- Mentor-mentee pairs, matched by faculty panel.
- Brief training for mentors.
- Required to meet at least three times.
- Informed consent obtained.
- Participant survey, reflection paper
Survey Questions

1. Able to quickly make contact with mentor/mentee.
2. Able to meet at least three times with mentor/mentee.
3. Received useful information from mentor/mentee.
4. Made an effort to get to know mentor/mentee as a person.
5. Mentor/mentee made an effort to get to know me as a person.
6. Mentor/mentee was trustworthy/someone I could confide in.
7. Suggestions to support academic success.
8. Appropriate emotional support offered/received.
Survey Questions

9. Information about useful campus resources.
10. Learning about occupational therapy program.
11. Positive role modeling.
12. Professional identity development.
13. Understanding of peer mentoring.
14. Overall positive experience.
15. Plan to seek mentorship opportunities in the future.
16. Plan to provide mentoring to others in the future.
1. Survey questions: descriptive statistics

2. Reflection papers and open-ended questions: thematic analysis
Preliminary Results: Survey

- Majority of responses: SA/A
- **Highest**: sharing student experience, supporting academic success, positive experience, future mentoring.
- **Lowest**: scheduling meetings, campus resources, personal relationship.
Other Findings

• No difference in responses between years.
• Higher overall satisfaction from mentors.
• Slightly higher satisfaction from MS/OT mentees.
• Both mentees and mentors plan to seek and offer mentoring in the future.
Survey Q # 17: Benefits

**Mentors:**
Professional skill development, validation of knowledge, reflective learning, responsibility, sense of accomplishment, leadership experience.

**Mentees:**
Confidence boost, access to support, role model, knowledge re: what to expect in program, advice, encouragement.
Survey Q # 18: Suggestions

**Mentors:**
Offer sooner in program, social gathering, structured topic sheet, longer training workshop, ask mentees to come prepared with concerns.

**Mentees:**
Plan shared activities, allow virtual meetings, meet before first midterms, better job with matches, offer more practical resources.
Survey Quotes

Mentor: “I was able to see myself as a professional, and understand that I had something to offer.”

Mentee: “It gave me hope and a sense of confidence in myself as an aspiring OT, and confidence in the program as well.”
1. Report and reflect on your mentor experience.
2. Read three journal articles about peer mentoring, summarize findings.
3. Envision, describe ideas about mentoring in your professional career.
4. Summary: overall experience, surprises, suggestions to improve the experience.
Reflections: Quotes

“There are advantages to students mentoring other students...students are sometimes intimidated by faculty, but the peer mentor relationship offers a more equal power dynamic.”

“I volunteered...because I felt I had a lot of great advice to offer a first year student. I am grateful to have made it this far, and wanted to guide someone to do the same.”

“It has given me confidence in mentoring others and taught me valuable lessons I can take with me as I enter the field of OT.”
Discussion

• Overall positive response to program.
• Mentors: facilitated professional identity development.
• Mentees: transition to graduate school.
• Both: reflective learning, self-confidence.
Suggestions

• Initial social gathering for participants.
• Mentor match at orientation.
• Improve matching process, match by track.
• Set goals at first meeting.
• More structure, clearer expectations.
• Training for mentees as well as mentors.
• Meet more than 3X, allow IM, text, email, phone.
• Mentoring across all class levels.
Limitations

• Time frame: one semester

• Schedule challenges between tracks

• Mentor/mentee match process
Resources

• Iowa State University Learning Communities
  [http://www.lc.iastate.edu/PMhandbook.html](http://www.lc.iastate.edu/PMhandbook.html).
• CSU Northridge Peer Mentor Resource Booklet
• City College of SF Peer Mentor Program


“Mentoring brings us together – across generation, class, and often race – in a manner that forces us to acknowledge our interdependence, to appreciate, in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s words, that ‘we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny.’ In this way, mentoring enables us to participate in the essential but unfinished drama of reinventing community, while reaffirming that there is an important role for each of us in it”.

-Marc Freedman, founder and CEO, Encore.org.
Questions, Comments? Thank you!

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