



Mentoring medical students by their Peers, Three Years' experience at Shiraz Medical School

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Please cite this paper as:

Ghahramani S, Seddigh F, Torabi Jahromi AR, Khandel A, Nematollahi P, Hashempoor Z, Rastegar Kazerooni AA. Mentoring medical students by their Peers, Three Years' experience at Shiraz Medical School. *J Adv Med Educ Prof.* 2019;7(3):156-157. DOI: 10.30476/JAMP.2019.45018.

Received: 26 November 2018 Accepted: 8 June 2019

Dear Editor

In respect of the scientific and cultural aspects of medical universities, the necessity of availing new methods is absolutely evident (1, 2). In mentorship programs an experienced student (mentor) takes the responsibility of orientation and guidance of a number of first-year students (mentees) (3). Mentoring is a two-way communication between the mentor and the mentees to achieve educational objectives (4-6). In this process students receive guidance from senior students and professors on how to deal with challenges more effectively (7).

There are some previous articles about mentorship programs in some medical schools all over the world such as India and the USA (3, 8-10).

In this letter we aimed to briefly explain activities carried out by mentoring teams of Shiraz Medical School, as one of the leading medical schools in the field of mentoring (11).

The mentoring program at Shiraz Medical School started in July 2015, inviting fifteen high ranked medical students with expertise in communication skills, studying in the 3rd or 5th semesters. Some workshops about new teaching and learning methods, new assessment methods,

communication skills and effective consulting techniques were held for mentors by expert faculties. Three mentees were assigned to one mentor. In choosing mentees for each mentor good communication between the mentor and the mentees were considered.

Afterwards, the central committee of mentorship was developed with supervision of an experienced full professor academic who was expert in the field of medical education. This central committee gave advice to mentor and mentees about study skills, laboratory skills, communication skills, team work, and research techniques. At the end of the first year, a self-constructed valid and reliable questionnaire was given to the mentees to assess the effectiveness of mentoring and goal achievements. The questionnaire consisted of 5 questions about the impact of mentoring on the first year of the medical school. Primary evidence showed that 53 percent of the mentees believed that mentoring had a great impact on helping them in adjusting faster to the new conditions. Also a statistically significant increase of grade point average was seen in mentees' scores in comparison to their classmates that had not participated in the

mentoring program.

Following the outcomes of the mentoring program in 2016, the mentoring group expanded its activity and accepted a number of international students as mentees, in addition to Iranian students. Meanwhile some other experienced mentors were added to the mentoring group.

Mentoring was introduced to new students during a meeting and among them about a 100 voluntarily enrolled in the program as mentees. In its third year of activity the mentoring program has extended its activity to the mentoring of international students (considering their relative lack of proficiency of the Persian language, and relative unfamiliarity with the Iranian culture and the education system in Iran). The mentees' average grades at the end of the second year, showed a significant increase among international mentees. The average grade of international students, who had mentors, was 15.7 out of 20, while that of the international students of previous years (i.e. international students who had not benefited from mentoring) was 12.1, 14.7, and 13 out of 20, respectively.

Besides, more expert faculties from different disciplines got involved in the program. We believed that every successful medical student should help other young medical students who enter medical school each year.

Conflict of Interest: None declared.

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