

The Ethics of Mentoring

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Introduction

- Emergency medicine, as a field, sometimes behaves as if one is prepared to be an independent investigator if one:
 - Attended a course on research methodology; or
 - Completed a research project as a resident.

Research Training

- Blanda *et al** surveyed EM Research Directors:
 - 53% were junior faculty;
 - Median time in position: 3 years;
 - 1/3 reported no publications in the prior 3 years;
 - Only 27% had a research degree; and
 - Only 21% had completed a research fellowship of any duration.

Blanda *et al*. Academic Emergency Medicine 1999;6:286-291.

The Need for a Mentor

- Although data are difficult to obtain, a good mentor is probably one of the most important predictors of long term research success.
- Especially true for investigators with little formal research training (i.e., no PhD).
- Quality of the research mentor and the mentor-trainee relationship are critical factors in the evaluation of training and fellowship grants.

Ethical Issues in Mentoring

- Balance must be struck between:
 - Goals of trainee
 - Didactic learning
 - Individual research activities
 - Developing independence
 - Career development and opportunity
 - Goals of mentor
 - Scientific productivity
 - Continued development of career and reputation
 - Receipt of continued funding

Goals of Mentoring

- To prepare the trainee for a productive career as an independent investigator.
- To prepare the trainee to become an effective mentor themselves.
- To help ensure the trainee achieves satisfaction and happiness in their professional life.

Primary Issue

- Mentor must see mentoring itself as a priority, not as a means to an end, and be willing to invest:
 - Time
 - Resources
 - Time
 - Encouragement
 - Time

Example 1

- Dr. Smith is a graduating senior resident who would like to pursue an academic research-based career.
- A faculty member offers Dr. Smith a one-year research fellowship, during which Dr. Smith will help the faculty member complete laboratory experiments funded by a currently existing grant (a sure thing!).

Example 1: Issues

- Inadequate duration of training.
- No formal didactic program.
- Learning narrow set of laboratory skills.
- No plan for progression towards independence.
- Motivation of faculty is based on own research program.

The NIH View of Research Training

- “In all cases, postdoctoral trainees should agree to engage in at least 2 years of research, research training, or comparable activities beginning at the time of appointment since the duration of training has been shown to be strongly correlated with post-training research activity.”

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/1997/97.05.16/notice-nih-national-6.html>

Example 2

- Dr. Jones is a second year research fellow who has just had an abstract accepted for oral presentation at SAEM.
- An error is discovered in the data analysis on which the abstract is based.
- Dr. Jones brings this to the attention of the mentor.

Example 2: Issues

- Rare (hopefully) teachable moment.
- The purpose of research fellowship is training, not research.
- Options:
 - Communicate and withdraw;
 - Communicate and correct at presentation;
 - Correct at presentation; or
 - Correct at publication.
- See Lewis RJ, Newgard CD. An Error in Research: Admission, Anxiety, and Action. Acad Emerg Med 2000;7:1177-1179.

Example 3

- Dr. Garcia is a trainee under Dr. Miller.
- Dr. Garcia has an idea to solve a new problem, using a methodological approach she learned from Dr. Miller.
- The approach yields promising results which are used to:
 - Submit an abstract;
 - Write a manuscript; and
 - Write a grant application.
- Dr. Miller wishes he'd thought of the idea!

Example 3: Issues

- Intellectual ownership of ideas and public credit.
- Authorship order.
- Attribution on grant and role on grant application.
- Independence of trainees.
- Jealousy.
- Represent potential conflicts between trainee's and mentor's goals, desires, and aspirations.

Example 4

- Dr. Chang is a promising trainee completing her two-year research fellowship and currently looking for a first faculty position.
- She has published two papers and has two in press.
- During an interview at a top-notch institution she is asked about her "long term commitment to an academic career."

Example 4: Issues

- The interviewer may or may not ask that same question of male applicants for the position.
- Nonetheless, the implications are different.
- The trainee must be prepared for this type of prejudice and discrimination.

Mentorship and Gender

- Nonnemaker L. NEJM 2000;342:399-405.
 - Women are underrepresented in senior academic positions, despite near gender equality (44%) in incoming medical school classes.
 - Women are more likely to enter academic careers than men, but less likely to be promoted to associate professor.

Mentorship and Gender

- Yedidia MJ *et al.* Academic Medicine 2001;76:453-465:
 - Interviewed 34 Chairs, 2 Chiefs in 5 specialties regarding barriers confronting women in academic medicine.
 - Constraints of traditional gender roles.
 - Manifestations of sexism in the medical environment.
 - Lack of effective mentors.

Mentorship, Gender, and Race

- The academic playing field is not level:
 - Gender issues; and
 - Racial/ethnic discrimination.
- The mentor must openly address these issues and teach strategies for overcoming barriers to success.
- See: Lewis RJ. Some Thoughts Regarding Gender Issues in the Mentoring of Future Academicians. Acad Emerg Med 2003;10:59-61.

Mentorship and Commitment

- The mentor must be proactive in supporting his or her trainees beyond fellowship:
 - Positions and collaborative opportunities;
 - Committee involvement; and
 - Editorial activities.
- The mentor is often in a position to ensure that the junior faculty's contributions are appropriately noticed and rewarded:
 - Meetings;
 - Manuscripts; and
 - Grants.

