

Responsibilities of Mentors and Mentees

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My Pathway to Research and Mentoring

- Fellow in Hematology/Oncology 2000-2002.
- Interested in palliative and end of life care research but this was a new research field with no experienced investigators at MGH.
- It took me my entire fellowship to write one protocol.



My Pathway to Research and Mentoring

- My clinical mentor somehow found a pharmaceutical company to pay for my first palliative care study.
- Based on that pilot study - I received a three year ASCO CDA (2005-2008) and then an R01 (2011-2016).
- In 2014, I received a mid-CDA (K24).



My Pathway to Research and Mentoring

- My research focuses on
 - integrating palliative and oncology care for patients with advanced cancer
 - communication about prognosis and end of life care preferences
 - symptom management



Mentoring Roles

- I am a relatively new mentor and started serving as a primary mentor two to three years ago.
- I am currently mentoring 6 people
 - 2 oncology fellows
 - 3 junior faculty in oncology
 - 1 junior faculty in psychology



My Mentoring Experiences

- I did not (and still do not) have a research mentor.
- Despite my lack of research mentorship, I have a deep appreciation of the role a mentor can play in their mentees' life.
- Becoming a mentor has been one of the most satisfying (and difficult) experiences of my career.



When are you ready to start mentoring?

- When you feel as if you are at a point in your career that you have the experience, expertise, time, commitment (and money?) to serve as a mentor.
- Some (much?) of your time spent mentoring will not “pay off” so you need to be at a point in your career where that is acceptable to you.



When are you ready to start mentoring?

- Experience
 - R01 or similar level of funding
- Expertise
 - National reputation in your field
- Time
 - Time to spend with mentees (either funded or unfunded)
- Commitment
 - Priority for you to train others
- Money
 - Few sources of funding for trainees



You MUST Have The Time

- Sufficient time to commit to supporting, educating and training the mentee:
 - Participating in regular meetings
 - Providing training on writing grants and manuscripts
 - Reviewing and editing grant applications and manuscripts



When are you ready to start mentoring?

- When you are at a point in your career when you can be more “selfless”.
- You certainly advance your own career by being a mentor (salary support, senior author publications).
- However, a substantial portion of the time/effort you invest will not lead to grant funding and publications.



When are you ready to be mentored?

- Always!
- Seek advice, support, guidance from individuals you respect as much as you possibly can.
- Don't be afraid to seek out leaders in your field at other institutions as most will be happy to help.



What Are the Necessary Qualities of a Successful Research Mentor?

- Sufficient expertise in the mentees' field of interest to be able to guide their research.
 - While the interests should be related, best for them to not be completely overlapping.
- Willing to learn new aspects and areas in the field.



What Are the Necessary Qualities of a Successful Research Mentor?

- You don't need be completely familiar with the mentees clinical interests, as long as you have the research skills and experience to ensure they are asking relevant questions and planning well-designed research.
- CAVEAT – probably less true for basic science research.



What Are the Necessary Qualities of a Successful Research Mentor?

- I am a thoracic oncologist who studies early palliative care and end of life care in patients with metastatic cancer
- I am mentoring people in the following:
 - Supportive care in patients with hematologic malignancies
 - Geriatric oncology
 - Behavioral interventions to improve medication adherence
 - Exercise interventions in patients with multiple myeloma



Questions about time/readiness to mentor?



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What Are the Necessary Qualities of a Successful Research Mentor?

- If you have clear weaknesses – probably best to address it before you start mentoring.
- Harvard Catalyst, MGH Research Program, foundations in your research area can help.
- If you cannot address some of your deficiencies – ask for help.



Examples of needing additional training/education to enhance your ability to mentor?



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Deciding Who to Mentor

- One of the most significant challenges.
- As a young mentor, err on the side of agreeing to mentor.
- As you have more mentees, can be more selective.
- Be honest with yourself about what is important to you.



Deciding Who to Mentor

- Be honest with the potential mentee about what you are like to work with.
 - Have them speak with other mentees.
- Set expectations regarding productivity and follow through.
- Share your limitations!
- Establish guidelines regarding your role and authorship.



Choosing a Mentor

- Express your interests and gauge their enthusiasm.
- Inquire about their previous experience mentoring.
- Ask about their time commitment to meeting and reviewing your work.
- Try to get to know them to ensure you can establish a positive relationship.



Have you found it difficult to
decide who to mentor?



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Establishing Relationships

- For my style of mentoring, it has been important for me to get to know my mentees personally.
- Schedule periodic social gatherings.
- Celebrate their accomplishments and share them with their other colleagues.



Meeting Format and Schedule

- I meet with my mentees every week.
- I look at my schedule in advance and if I am missing the weekly meeting, I offer to reschedule.
- My mentees bring a list of their ongoing projects, grants and manuscripts in preparation and future study ideas.



Meeting Format and Schedule

- Some of my mentees are doing projects in their clinical areas of expertise with mentorship from others.
- I am willing to provide a moderate amount of guidance/suggestion on those projects and as the mentee to keep them on weekly list.



Key Responsibilities as a Mentor

- Advise your mentee on scheduling/time management.
- Establish milestones on their career goals.
- Inform them of grant opportunities.
- Review their grant applications and manuscripts and teach them how to improve!!



Letter Writing

- I feel VERY strongly that it is unacceptable to ask your primary mentees to draft their own letters for grants or other important applications.
- May be ok for secondary mentorship roles but would still limit mentees writing to aspect of the project you are not expert in.



Key Responsibilities as a Mentee

- Be timely
 - Meetings with mentor
 - Deadlines for grants and manuscripts
- Be responsive
 - To feedback
- Take responsibility
 - Don't rely on your mentor for everything
- Be respectful of their time
 - Provide lead time for requests for reviews, letters of support
- Be appreciative
 - Say thank you



Team Mentoring

- My research group is incredibly multi-disciplinary.
- Several years ago, I began team mentoring with mentees of different training/backgrounds but complementary interests.
- Important to establish good teamwork among mentees.



Team Mentoring

- Allows greater collaborations amongst mentees.
- Longer meeting times.
- Need for flexibility if mentees need 1:1 meetings.
- Difficult to reschedule multiple people.



What challenging mentoring situations have you experienced?



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Dealing with Difficult Situations as a Mentor

1. Mentee not meeting expectations about completing tasks
2. Mentee has poor writing skills that are not improving with feedback
3. Mentee getting input from too many others
4. Authorship issues



Dealing with Difficult Situations as a Mentee

1. Mentor not dedicating adequate time to the relationship
2. Mentor not providing adequate career guidance
3. Mentor not sufficiently reviewing grant applications and manuscripts



Key Funding Sources for Mentors and Mentees

- Mentors
 - K24
- Mentees
 - Young investigator awards
 - Internal and external career development awards
 - Foundation career developments awards



Transitioning Mentees to Independence

- Encourage them to begin working on their R01 or equivalent grant applications in the last years of their career development award.
- MGH and Harvard Catalyst training programs regarding transitioning to R01.
- Meet with them and *their* mentees periodically.



Maintaining Relationships

- Foster mentor/mentee relationships throughout your career.
- There are always things you need advise about regardless of how far you progress in your career.
- Be generous with your mentees, even once they transition to independence.



Key Lessons Learned

- Don't agree to mentor someone that you don't feel that you can successfully mentor.
 - Even if its personal....
- Be honest with your mentees early. Don't wait until the point that you are frustrated to give feedback.



What other challenges/successes
have you encountered?
Lessons learned??



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Example 1

- Your division hires a Instructor who just completed fellowship training from an outside institution and asks you to provide research mentorship after only meeting the individual once while she was interviewing for the position.



Example 1

- While you are excited to mentor a junior faculty member you find this mentorship relationship tough right from the start.
 - Research experience not as billed
 - Communication skills poor
 - Not timely with follow through
- How do you handle these issues?



Example 1

- Despite providing feedback and the mentee completing additional training – things do not improve and you think it is unlikely that the mentee will succeed as an independent researcher.
- What do you do?



Example 1

- The mentee agrees that he/she is not going to pursue a research career but would like to finish out their projects.
- However, their progress on the project proceeds slowly?
- What do you do?



Example 2

- You have invested time and funds into a mentees project and expect to be senior author on the publication.
- The mentee has an internal medicine resident help out with the chart review and agrees to have the resident serve as first author on the manuscript.
- What do you do?

