



# Mentorship

In healthcare, mentorship has continued to evolve and is acknowledged as an influential professional development tool for emerging healthcare leaders. There are many definitions of mentoring. Mentoring can be described as a relationship between a novice and expert practitioner. The mentor encourages the novice to manage their own learning, so they become self-reliant in the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, abilities and develops the continuous motivation to do so.<sup>1</sup> Mentoring promotes role development and socialisation within a supportive environment.<sup>2</sup> Nurse and Midwifery leaders use mentorship as a tool for succession planning. Becoming a mentor is a lifelong transformative process that grows from diverse experience and influential role modelling rather than formal instruction.<sup>2</sup>

Table1: Brief description of professional support models in Healthcare<sup>3,4,5,6</sup>

Professional Support Models	Description
Informal mentoring	The process of people engaging in a voluntary relationship without any organisational intervention or support. The identification of mentors/mentees is through self-selection. It's limited in the ability to capture the extent to which informal mentoring takes place or its effectiveness.
Formal mentoring	The process of two people engaging in a mentor relationship with organisational support structures to ensure clarity of purpose and success.
Peer mentoring	Involves two or more people at the same level of experience who learn from and support each other's professional development.
E-mentoring	Electronic communication applications and web-based technology are used to assist with mentoring programs. E-mentoring relies upon computer mediated communication (CMC) to enable the mentoring to take place.
Preceptorship	The formal assignment of an experienced practitioner for a fixed period of time, to provide transitional support to an undergraduate or clinician, into a new practice setting, through role modelling, teaching, and socialising.
Clinical supervision	A formal process of professional support and learning between two or more practitioners within a safe and supportive environment, that enables a continuum of reflective critical analysis of care, to ensure the delivery of quality patient services and the well-being of the practitioner.

<sup>1</sup> Klasen, N, Clutterbuck, D. Implementing mentoring schemes: A Practical Guide to Successful Programs. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann; 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick, D. Bullying, Mentoring, and Patient Care. AORN Journal, 2014; 99 (5): 587-593

<sup>3</sup> Cant, R, Cooper, S. The benefits of debriefing as formative feedback in nurse education. Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing, 2011; 29 (1); p.37-47.

<sup>4</sup> Ensher, E, Murphy, S. E-mentoring: Next Generation Research Strategies and Suggestions. In Ragins, B, Kram, K editors. The handbook of Mentoring at work: Theory, Research and Practice, Sage: Thousand Oaks; 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Ehrich, L. Developing performance mentoring handbook. Queensland: Department of Education, Training and Employment; 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Fletcher, S. Fostering the use of web-based technology in mentoring and coaching. In Fletcher, S, Mullen, C editors. Sage handbook of mentoring and coaching in education. Sage Publications, London; 2012 p. 74-88

Mentoring involves multiple roles depending on the needs of the mentee. This includes the following:

- a mutual relationship where participants share experiences and information
- a developmental process where the mentee grows in skills, knowledge and confidence
- a strategy to share intellectual and other resources
- guided learning and formal support by the mentor (more experienced and skilled person)

## Benefits of mentoring

Mentoring is based on the fundamental aspects of mutual respect, valuing different viewpoints, acknowledging influences, sharing resources and communication. Mentoring is an empowering relationship between novice and experienced nurses that enriches practice by nurturing the development of the mentee.<sup>7,8</sup> Mentoring is best practice, to foster success in career transition.<sup>2,9,10</sup> A successful mentoring culture begins with authentic leadership, genuine caring, respect for employees and open communication. Mentoring encompasses both an emotional and a transitional relationship in which the experienced professional guides and serves as a role model for the less experienced person. Those involved in the mentoring relationship feel valued, encouraged and are exposed to leadership opportunities.<sup>11,12</sup> Mentorship is beneficial and considered a strategic means to mitigate nursing shortages, promote socialisation and retention, and succession planning.<sup>13,14,15</sup>

For the mentee:

- the ability to focus on self-development to improve knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes
- the ability to focus on career development /promotion and future planning
- a greater understanding of roles in the organisation and insight into organisational culture
- be in a supportive environment, which successes and failures can be evaluated in a non-confrontational manner
- the ability to reflect of different perspectives
- the ability to obtain competencies and professional experience
- the ability to develop networking opportunities
- the ability to gain greater appreciation of the complexities of decision-making within the organisational framework
- the ability to develop professional confidence and to support others

For the mentor:

- the ability to cultivate opportunities and to test new ideas or innovations
- the ability to enhance knowledge of other areas of the organisations
- a renewed enthusiasm for your role as an experienced employee

<sup>7</sup> Morton-Cooper A, Palmer A. Mentoring, Preceptorship and Clinical Supervision. Second edition. Blackwell, Oxford 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Verdejo, T. Mentoring: A model method. Nursing Management, 2002; 33(8), 15-16.

<sup>9</sup> Daniels, M. Mentoring: Link to the future. Reflections on Nursing Leadership, 2004; 30, 24-25

<sup>10</sup> Pinkerton, S.E. Mentoring new graduates. Nursing Economics, 2003; 21, 202-203.

<sup>11</sup> O'Neil E, Morjikian, R, Cherner, D, Hirschhorn, C, West T. Developing nursing leaders. An overview of trends and programs. The Journal of Nursing Administration 2008; 38: 178-83.

<sup>12</sup> Fielden SL, Davidson, MJ, Sutherland, VJ. Innovations in coaching and mentoring: Implications for nurse leadership development. Health Services Management Research 2009; 22: 92-9

<sup>13</sup> Thomka LA.. Mentoring and its impact on intellectual capital through the eyes of the mentee. Nursing Administration Quarterly 2007; 31: 22-6

<sup>14</sup> Valiga TM and S Grossman. Leadership and followership. In Nursing leadership and management. Theories, processes, practice, ed. RAP Jones, 3-12. Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, JE, Billingsley, M, Crichlow, T, Ferrell, E. Professional development for nurses. Mentoring along the U-Shaped curve. Nursing Administration Quarterly, 2011; 35:119-25.

- the ability to gain higher level recognition of your worth and skills through encouragement to take on a mentoring role and satisfaction from contributing to the mentee's development
- participate in challenging discussions with people who have different perspectives
- the ability to develop a deeper awareness of your own behaviour
- the ability to improve inter-personal skills in counselling, listening, role modelling and leading
- the ability to share experience and knowledge

For the organisation:

- an improved delivery of services through more informed and competent staff
- an increase of staff with the application of knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes gained from mentoring
- a reduction in the cost for recruitment and selection due to employee retention
- an improvement in communication between separate areas of the organisation
- a well-developed support network across the organisation and healthcare sector
- a sustainable model of authentic leadership as successful mentees often become mentors
- the ability to promote a learning environment where employees are developed by leaders in health
- more committed and productive staff that can contribute to succession planning, and transmitting of cultural values and norms that can contribute to a change in workplace culture

## The Mentor–Mentee partnership<sup>16,17,18,19,20,21</sup>

Characteristics of effective mentorships in the context of professional development include the following:

<sup>16</sup> Murray, M, Beyond the Myths and Magic of Mentoring; How to Facilitate an Effective Mentoring Process, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass John Wiley & Sons, Inc 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Rolfe-Flett A. Mentoring in Australia. Frenchs Forest, NSW: Prentice Hall., Pearson Education; 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Clutterbuck, D, Everyone Needs a Mentor; Fostering talent on your organisation, Fourth Edition, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) 2004.

<sup>19</sup> PEPA Project Team. The Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach Mentoring Guide. Queensland University of Technology: Brisbane 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Northcott, N. Clinical supervision – professional development or management control. In Spouse, J. and Redfern, L (eds) Successful Supervision in Health Care Practice: Promoting Professional Development. Blackwell Science, Oxford 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Zeus, P, Skiffington, S. The Complete Guide to Coaching at Work. McGraw-Hall, Sydney 2001.

- The mentor and mentee work in a voluntary capacity towards the same goals
- The mentor and mentee have mutual respect and consider each other as equals irrespective of their different knowledge, skill and experience levels
- The mentor and mentee requires good communication and interpersonal and problem solving skills
- The mentor and mentee must be committed and motivated
- Maintain confidentiality
- Respectfully listen to feedback with an open mind and expect to be challenged with alternative points of views
- Mentors have a sound knowledge base, are competent in their field and have a good awareness of safe practice
- The mentor needs to have an established network and be willing to share information, skills and wisdom
- The mentee uses initiative and has the capacity for self-direction

### **As a mentor**

The range of expected attributes that should be demonstrated by the mentor includes;

- Acting as a positive role model and providing guidance in a supportive environment
- Assisting the mentee to identify objectives and personal development goals
- Promoting confidence, professional responsibility and accountability
- Providing advice and strategies to assist the mentee in meeting professional development goals and objectives
- Utilising and promoting reflective practice and critical thinking
- Fostering the development of professional identity, leadership and accountability

### **As a mentee**

- Works with mentor to identify and set objectives and personal development goals
- Accepts professional responsibility and accountability for their own decisions and actions
- Maintains regular contact as agreed with the mentor
- Collaborates with mentor to share skills, knowledge and strategies to address professional development goals and objectives
- Demonstrates reflective practice and critical thinking
- Review own performance and progress with mentor

## **Barriers to effective mentoring**

Evidence suggests some barriers to mentoring include limited time to dedicate to mentorship, competing priorities in work schedules and a lack of protected time to develop others. In addition to the barriers mentioned, different geographic locations can impede the effectiveness of the mentorship and the ability to deliver feedback (misinterpretation or miscommunication due to asynchronous communication, time to develop trust and rapport in the relationship).

The frequently cited barriers to effective mentoring include:

- lack of time dedicated to mentor adequately
- professional expertise/personality mismatch
- differences in philosophy/ideology and mismatches caused tension in the relationship

- problematic behaviours of mentors such as: mentors who were critical; who failed to provide guidance or feedback; who failed to understand the goals; that lacked commitment; and who provided ineffective or inadequate advice
- a lack of understanding about the goals
- difficulties to engage or commitment to the goals
- mentoring seen as an extra burden of responsibility
- emotionally draining or stressful experience
- insufficient resources or encouragement from others

## **Giving and receiving feedback<sup>22</sup>**

Feedback is essential ingredient for personal learning and professional development. Without feedback people are left to “fill in the blanks” on their development and performance. Feedback enables the mentee to develop their personal effectiveness by learning about their development needs and understanding their strengths. As a mentee, the mentor will give feedback on performance, ideas, development progress, etc. Giving and receiving effective feedback remains an essential skill that can help improve the quality of the mentoring relationship.

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<sup>22</sup> Board Mentoring Toolkit. The State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; 2015

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