



Das Dipmala¹, Deb Roy
Asitava^{2*}, Raweka Alka³
1Department of Pathology,
IQ City Medical College,
Durgapur, India
2Department of
Microbiology, IQ City
Medical College, Durgapur,
India
3Department of Physiology,
Datta Meghe Institute of
Medical Sciences, Wardha,
India

*IQ City Medical College,
Bijra Road, Sovapur,
Durgapur-713206,
West Bengal,
India

Tel: +9475587658
Email:
asitavadr@gmail.com

Mentorship program in a private medical college of Eastern India: evaluation, appraisal and recommendations

Background: Mentorship programs are becoming increasingly common in undergraduate medical education all over the world. However, very few medical colleges are running mentorship programs in India. A mentorship program was introduced in IQ City Medical College for the first year MBBS students to help them cope up with the stress of the new environment. The aim of this study was to evaluate the mentorship program with regard to its efficacy, utility, limitation and potential for improvement after successful completion of one year of the program.

Methods: It was a questionnaire based cross sectional study including 143 mentees and 15 mentors conducted in a tertiary care teaching hospital for five months from November 2019 to March 2020. The feedback was collected with a pre validated questionnaire containing 10 questions (8 close ended and 2 open ended). Feedback of closed ended questions were obtained by using a 5-point Likert scale (1 to 5) where 5 indicated 'Strongly Agree' and 1 indicated 'Strongly Disagree'.

Results: Out of 143 mentees, 124 (86.7%) and out of 15 mentors, 10 (66.7%) mentioned that mentorship program is necessary for the welfare of the students. However, it was also noted that better communication and frequent meetings can improve the outcome of the program.

Conclusion: Mentorship program is deemed essential, however, a well-structured framework and dedicated time from both mentors and mentees will make the program more successful. This type of feedback evaluation is however important to validate such program.

Keywords: Mentee, Mentor, Feedback Evaluation

برنامہ الإرشاد في كلية الطب الخاصة في شرق الهند: التقييم والتقييم والتوصيات

الخلفية: أصبحت برامج الإرشاد أكثر شيوعاً في التعليم الطبي الجامعي في جميع أنحاء العالم. ومع ذلك، فإن عدداً قليلاً جداً من الكليات الطبية تدير برامج إرشادية في الهند. تم تقديم برنامج إرشادي في كلية الطب IQ City للطلاب السنة الأولى MBBS لمساعدتهم على التعامل مع ضغوط البيئة الجديدة. كان الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تقييم برنامج الإرشاد فيما يتعلق بفعايلته وفائدته ومحدوده وإمكانية التحسين بعد الانتهاء بنجاح من عام واحد من البرنامج.

الطريقة: كانت دراسة مقطعية قائمة على الاستبيان تضم 143 متدرّباً و 15 موجهاً تم إجراؤها في مستشفى تعليمي للرعاية الثالثة لمدة خمسة أشهر من نوفمبر 2019 إلى مارس 2020. تم جمع التعليقات من خلال استبيان تم التحقق من صحته مسبقاً يحتوي على 10 أسئلة (8 منتهية و 2 مفتوحة). تم الحصول على تعليقات الأسئلة المغلقة باستخدام مقياس ليكرت المكون من 5 نقاط (1 إلى 5) حيث أشارت 5 إلى "أوافق بشدة" وأشار 1 إلى "لا أوافق بشدة".

النتائج: من أصل 143 موجهاً، 124 (86.7%) ومن 15 موجهاً، 10 (66.7%) أن برنامج الإرشاد ضروري لرفاهية الطلاب. ومع ذلك، لوحظ أيضاً أن تحسين الاتصال والاجتماعات المتكررة يمكن أن يحسن نتائج البرنامج.

الخلاصة: يعتبر برنامج الإرشاد ضرورياً، ومع ذلك، فإن وجود إطار منظم جيداً ووقت مخصص من كل من الموجهين والمتدربين سيجعل البرنامج أكثر نجاحاً. هذا النوع من تقييم الملاحظات مهم للتحقق من صحة مثل هذا البرنامج.

الكلمات المفتاحية: موجه، موجه، تقييم التغذية الراجعة

برنامہ ہدایت تحصیلی در یک کالج پزشکی خصوصی در شرق ہند: سنجش، ارزیابی و توصیه

زمینه و هدف: برنامه های هدایت تحصیلی به طور فزاینده ای در آموزش پزشکی در مقطع کارشناسی در سراسر جهان در حال رواج است. با این حال، تعداد بسیار کمی از کالج های پزشکی برنامه های هدایت تحصیلی را در هند اجرا می کنند. یک برنامه هدایت تحصیلی در کالج پزشکی شهر ای کیو برای دانشجویان سال اول MBBS معرفی شد تا به آنها کمک کند تا با استرس محیط جدید کنار بیایند. هدف از این مطالعه ارزیابی برنامه هدایت تحصیلی با توجه به اثربخشی، سودمندی، محدودیت و پتانسیل بهبود آن پس از اتمام موفقیت آمیز یک سال برنامه است.

روش: این یک مطالعه مقطعی مبتنی بر پرسشنامه، شامل 143 شاگرد و 15 مربی بود که به مدت پنج ماه از نوامبر 2019 تا مارس 2020 در یک بیمارستان آموزشی مراقبت های عالی انجام شد. بازخوردها با یک پرسشنامه از پیش معتبر شامل 10 سوال (8 سوال پایانی و 2 سوال باز) جمع آوری شد. بازخورد سوالات بسته با استفاده از مقیاس لیكرت 5 درجه ای (1 تا 5) به دست آمد که 5 نشان دهنده «کاملاً موافقم» و 1 نشان دهنده «کاملاً مخالفم» بود.

یافته ها: از 143 نفر شاگرد، 124 نفر (86.7%) و از 15 مربی، 10 نفر (66.7%) برنامه هدایت تحصیلی را برای رفاه حال دانشجویان ضروری دانستند. با این حال اشاره شد که ارتباط بهتر و جلسات مکرر می تواند نتیجه برنامه را بهبود بخشد.

نتیجه گیری: برنامه هدایت تحصیلی ضروری تلقی می شود، البته یک چارچوب خوب ساختار یافته و زمان اختصاص داده شده از سوی مربی ها و شاگردها باعث موفقیت بیشتر برنامه خواهد شد. با این حال، این نوع ارزیابی بازخورد برای اعتبار بخشیدن به چنین برنامه ای مهم است.

واژه های کلیدی: شاگرد، مربی، ارزیابی بازخورد

مشرقی ہندوستان کے نجی میڈیکل کالج میں مینٹرشپ پروگرام: تشخيص، تشخيص اور سفارشات خلاصہ

پس منظر: پوری دنیا میں انڈرگریجویٹ میڈیکل ایجوکیشن میں مینٹرشپ پروگرام تیزی سے عام ہوتے جا رہے ہیں۔ تاہم، بہت کم میڈیکل کالج ہندوستان میں مینٹرشپ پروگرام چلا رہے ہیں۔ آئی کیو سٹی میڈیکل کالج میں ایم بی بی ایس کے پہلے سال کے طلباء کے لیے ایک مینٹرشپ پروگرام متعارف کرایا گیا تاکہ نئے ماحول کے تناؤ سے نمٹنے میں ان کی مدد کی جا سکے۔ اس مطالعے کا مقصد مینٹرشپ پروگرام کی افادیت، افادیت، محدودیت اور پروگرام کے ایک سال کی کامیابی سے تکمیل کے بعد بہتری کے امکانات کے حوالے سے جائزہ لینا تھا۔

طریقہ کار: یہ ایک سولنامہ پر مبنی کراس سیکشنل اسٹڈی تھا جس میں 143 مینٹیز اور 15 مینٹیز شامل تھے جو کہ ٹرینری کیئر ٹیچنگ ہسپتال میں نومبر 2019 سے مارچ 2020 تک پانچ مہینوں کے لیے کیے گئے تھے۔ فیڈ بیک پہلے سے تصدیق شدہ سوالنامے کے ساتھ جمع کیا گیا تھا جس میں 10 سوالات تھے (8 بند ختم ہوئے اور 2 کھلا ختم)۔ 5 نکاتی لیكرت اسکیل (1 سے 5) کا استعمال کرتے ہوئے بند ختم شدہ سوالات کا فیڈ بیک حاصل کیا گیا جہاں 5 نے 'سختی سے اتفاق' اور 1 نے 'سختی سے اختلاف' کا اشارہ کیا۔

نتائج: 143 مینٹیز میں سے، 124 (86.7%) اور 15 مینٹرز میں سے، 10 (66.7%) نے بتایا کہ طلباء کی فلاح و بہبود کے لیے مینٹرشپ پروگرام ضروری ہے۔ تاہم، یہ بھی نوٹ کیا گیا کہ بہتر رابطے اور بار بار ملاقاتیں پروگرام کے نتائج کو بہتر بنا سکتی ہیں۔ **نتیجہ:** مینٹرشپ پروگرام کو ضروری سمجھا جاتا ہے، تاہم، ایک اچھی طرح سے تشکیل شدہ فریم ورک اور سرپرستوں اور سرپرستوں دونوں کی طرف سے وقف وقت پروگرام کو مزید کامیاب بنائے گا۔ تاہم اس قسم کے فیڈ بیک کی تشخیص اس طرح کے پروگرام کی توثیق کے لیے اہم ہے۔

مطلوبہ الفاظ: مینٹی، سرپرست، تاثرات کی تشخیص

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring program in medical schools exist to provide support and guidance to students that contribute to a fulfilling undergraduate medical experience. Although the concept of mentorship program have been successfully implemented for medical undergraduates in other countries across the world, it is still in its experimental stage in India (1,2). Therefore, the present researchers thought of implementing this program for the students of first professional MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) and look for its impact on the students' performance.

With increasing pressure of medical curriculum, a student always looks for a person to help him or her to keep a balance and perform better. The goal of a mentorship program is to enhance the professional development of the mentee through direct transfer of knowledge and experience (3).

A mentor may have varied roles of a supervisor, a teacher, a guide or a coach (4). Mentoring involves developing a relationship that focuses on achieving specific goals (1). Providing effective academic and psychological support through such programs is one of the pivotal factors that contribute to the students' success in pursuing higher professional degree programs (5).

IQ City Medical College introduced mentorship program first time for the first professional Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) students keeping in mind that it is difficult for the first year students to combat various kinds of stress when they enter MBBS course due to emotional instability and also exposure to a completely new environment. Therefore, mentorship program was introduced in our college to support the students in their academic and personal development.

The index study was planned with the aim to evaluate the mentorship program with regard to its efficacy, utility, limitation and potential for improvement.

Objectives:

1. To find out the perception of mentors and mentees on the context, planning, inputs, implementation and outcome of the program.
2. To provide recommendations to improve outcome of the mentorship program.

METHODS

A questionnaire based cross sectional study was conducted in IQ City Medical College, a tertiary care private medical college for 6 months from October 2019 to March 2020 after getting due clearance from Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC)[IQMC/IEC/Project/13(06)/19].

The mentorship program was started with first professional students of the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) in the year 2018 for the first time. One hundred and fifty first year students were included in the study and randomly allotted to 15 faculty members by lottery system; each mentor getting 10 mentees under his/her consideration. Students of second and third (part I and II) professional MBBS were not included in this study.

Before starting the program, a one-day orientation on mentorship program describing the roles and responsibilities of a mentor and impact of mentorship on student performance

was organized for the mentors and mentees wherein the purpose and functioning of the program was briefed by the Medical Education Unit (MEU) Coordinator. Periodic meetings were conducted every month between mentors, and mentees and review meetings were conducted under the Chairmanship of the Academic Dean once in six months.

A structured feedback form for the program evaluation was developed; face validation and content validation were done by the Institutional Research Committee in collaboration with the Medical Education Unit [Annexure 1]. Reliability analysis was applied to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Internal consistency of the items was evaluated by Cronbach's alpha values. The items were considered to represent an acceptable level of internal consistency if the Cronbach's alpha value was within 0.5–0.7 and a good level if it was >0.7. There were two open-ended as well as eight close-ended questions, which were validated by members of the MEU. After successful completion of 1 year of the program, the feedback questionnaire was distributed to the 150 mentees (150 students of 3rd Semester) and 15 mentors to find out their perception regarding the mentorship program. Their responses were recorded and analyzed.

Feedback questionnaires were distributed by non-teaching staff of the institute (to avoid bias) and collected back in boxes kept in the department office (to ensure confidentiality and anonymity).

The feedback data was obtained using a 5-point Likert scale (1 to 5) where 5 indicated 'Strongly Agree' and 1 indicated 'Strongly Disagree' (Annexure 1). Focus Group Discussion was also conducted for mentors and mentees.

The feedback based on focus group discussion (FGD) was also collected from 15 mentees, who were selected using random number generator of SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 17.0 (Chicago: SPSS Inc.). Two sessions of FGD were carried out involving 7 students in each session (total 14 students) and one session was conducted involving 7 mentors.

Statistical methods used:

Collected data were compiled on Microsoft excel worksheets (Microsoft Office Excel 2007, Redwoods, WA, USA). Statistical evaluation was done using a simple percentage distribution. Data were analyzed with GraphPad Prism 5 (GraphPad Software Inc., CA, USA)

RESULTS

Mentorship program was introduced in 1st year MBBS students. Out of 150 First Professional MBBS students, 143 of either sex participated and gave their feedback regarding mentorship program. The remaining 7 students were absent on the day of distribution of feedback forms among students. All 15 mentors gave their feedback regarding mentorship program. Two sessions of FGD were carried out involving 7 students in each session and one session was conducted involving 7 mentors.

All the mentees were in the age group of 18 to 23 years. Among the mentors 8 were female and 7 were male. All the mentors were in the age group of 35-40 years of age.

*Likert scale was used for Table 2 and Table 3: Strongly agree: 5, Agree: 4, Neither agree nor disagree: 3, Disagree: 2, Strongly

disagree: 1; SD: Standard deviation; CI-Confidence Interval(95%).

Gender	Number
Male	73
Female	70

Table 2 and Table 3 depicted mean response of close ended questions given by mentees and mentors respectively. Q6 got highest mean response by mentees (4.10) and by mentors (3.67). All agreed that mentorship program is necessary for welfare of the students. As per mentees' perception Q5 got lowest mean value (2.70) and as per mentors' perception Q4 got lowest mean value (2.60). Figure 1 and Figure 2 represented perception of mentees and mentors regarding close ended questions.

Questions	Mean (SD)	Median	95% CI
Q1. Program has been implemented very well	3.41 (1.09)	4	3.25-3.59
Q2.Purpose of this program is well understood by mentors and mentees	3.65 (0.99)	4	3.49-3.81
Q3.The program has been well accepted by all mentors and mentees	3.69 (0.94)	4	3.54-3.85
Q4.Mentorship program helps mentee in combating different kinds of stress	3.19 (1.23)	3	2.99-3.39
Q5.Mentorship program helps in improving curricular and extra curricular activities of mentee	2.70 (1.33)	3	2.48-2.92
Q6.Mentorship program is necessary for welfare of students	4.10 (0.65)	4	4.00-4.21
Q7.Mentor should be the same for the entire course	3.41 (1.45)	4	3.17-3.65
Q8.Overall mentorship program is satisfactory	3.10 (1.15)	4	2.91 -3.29

Questions	Questions	Questions	Questions
Q1.Program has been implemented very well	3.40 (0.51)	3	3.12 -3.68
Q2.Purpose of this program is well understood by mentors and mentees	3.60 (0.63)	4	3.25-3.95
Q3.The program has been well accepted by all mentors and mentees	3.20 (0.86)	3	2.72-3.68
Q4.Mentorship program helps mentee in combating different kinds of stress	2.60 (1.06)	2	2.02-3.18
Q5.Mentorship program helps in improving curricular and extra curricular activities of mentee	3.00 (1.00)	3	2.45-3.55
Q6.Mentorship program is necessary for welfare of students	3.67 (0.49)	4	3.40-3.94
Q7.Mentor should be the same for the entire course	2.73 (1.22)	2	2.06-3.41
Q8.Overall mentorship program is satisfactory	3.13 (0.83)	3	2.67 -3.60

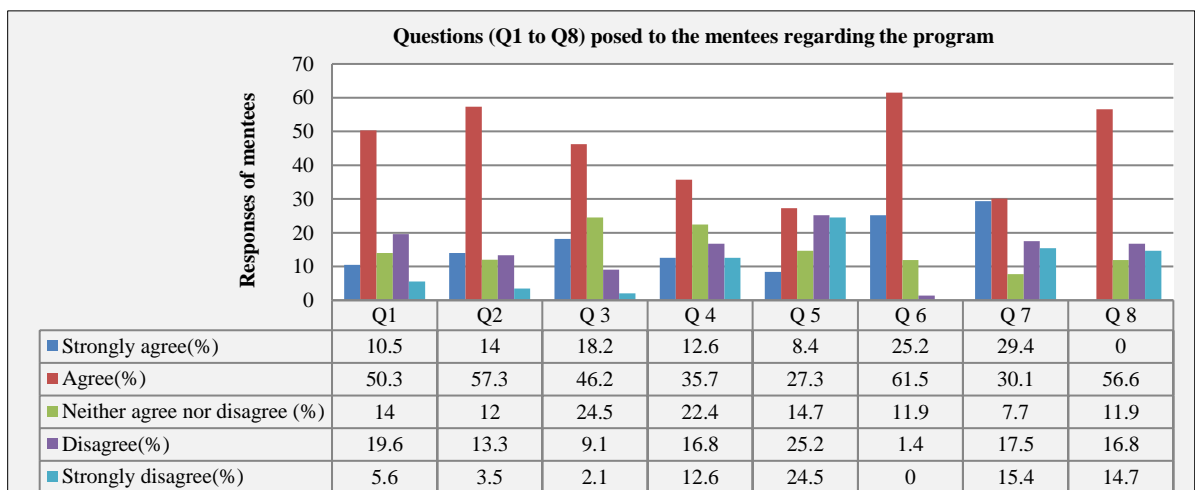


Figure 1. Perception of mentees on mentorship program closed ended questions

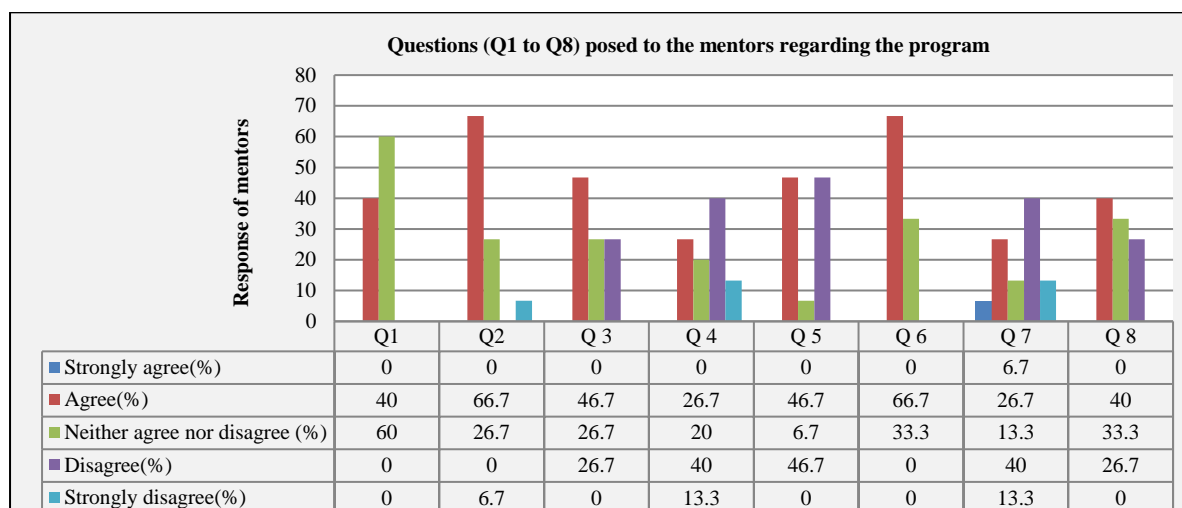


Figure 2. Perception of mentors on mentorship program close ended question

Mentees' perception:

- 86.7% of mentees agreed that mentorship program is necessary for welfare of students
- 56.6% of mentees agreed that overall mentorship program was satisfactory
- 59.5% of mentees agreed that mentor should be the same for entire course

Mentors' perception:

- 66.7% mentors agreed that mentorship program is necessary for welfare of students
- 40% mentors agreed that overall mentorship program was satisfactory
- Only 33.4% of mentors suggested that mentor should be the same for the entire course

From the above table (Table-3) the present researchers came to conclusion that 57.3% of mentees did not prefer to answer first open ended question. Most of the mentees (42.7%) and mentors (66.7%) suggested for frequent meetings for betterment of the program. Ten mentees also mentioned that

their mentor left the college four months back and new mentor was not allotted to them.

Important items were identified through content analysis by FDG which are mentioned in table (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

Mentorship program in India is known as guru-shishya parampara for ages. In most of the medical colleges in India there is no formal mentorship program. Students imbibe characteristics of their role model as a part of a hidden curriculum (6). A structured mentorship program might help the students in their professional development (7). Skjevik E P et al. in their systematic review mentioned that Group mentoring as an educational strategy for medical students holds great potential.

In current study the present researchers tried to evaluate mentorship program by assessing the perception of the mentees and mentors on this program. Most of the students agreed that mentorship program was very essential for

Table 3. Perception of mentees and mentors on mentorship program for open ended questions

Open ended questions	Responses	Response of mentors	
		Number (%)	Number (%)
Have you confronted any challenge in mentorship program?	Not answered	82 (57.3)	2 (13.3)
	None	51 (35.7)	9 (60.0)
	Mentor left the institute	10 (7.0)	NA
	Difficulty in managing time for interaction	0 (0)	4 (26.7)
	More frequent meeting	61 (42.7)	10 (66.7)
Would you like to give any suggestion for betterment of the program?	None	25 (17.5)	0 (0)
	Much focused and detailed care	22 (15.4)	2 (13.3)
	Better communication	20 (14.0)	2 (13.3)
	Not answered	15 (10.5)	1 (6.7)

Table 4. Content analysis by FDG

Items	Responses by Mentees	Responses by Mentors
Benefits of mentorship program	Help in combating stress	Helped in improving their leadership and communication skills
	Got guidance regarding initiating research	Personal satisfaction
	Mentor was like second parent	Personal and professional development
Suggestion for improvement of program	More frequent interaction	Mentees should open up more regarding their problems
	Better communication	Program should be more structured
	More dedication and time from the mentors	There should be some method to acknowledge the mentors' efforts

welfare of students. Similar responses were also observed from mentors as well. Mentees got support from their mentors regarding academic and non-academic stress. This finding was in accordance to the study by Kalén et al. (8) who reported that having a mentor was important for maximum students in terms of both professional and personal development.

Bhatia A et al (9) observed that most mentorship program helped them to develop a better student-teacher relationship. In their study it was observed that over 95% of respondents believed that mentoring was a good idea. Many believed that the mentee benefitted; however, mentors also reported an improvement in their communication and affective skills. Mentorship program helps build confidence in the mentor. It provides strength and skills necessary to stand confidently and boosts his or her life professionally and personally. Through mentoring, many mentors can hone their leadership skills. Mentoring may be a means of honing the affective domain and humanitarian instincts of medical faculty and students (10). Similar findings were observed in this study also. In the index study, 124 (86.7%) mentees and 10(66.7%) of mentors agreed that mentorship program is necessary for welfare of students.

Majority of mentors and the mentees reported that mentorship program improved the communication between them, which helped the mentees to discuss their problems with the mentors in a non-threatening environment; similar findings were reported by Usmani et al. (11). In contrast to this, in this study, most of the mentees and mentors suggested that better communication must be initiated for betterment of the program which would in turn make the program more successful.

From open ended questions in feedback questionnaire and FGD the present researchers received feedback that better communication and frequent meetings with mentees would have been more beneficial. However, the mentors and mentees were of the opinion that overall mentorship program was satisfactory for one year from the inception of the program in this institute. One drawback of the program that was observed was that, one mentor left the institute four months back and no new mentor was allotted to that group of students. Another limitation of this study was that the researchers could include only students of first professional MBBS only as this program was being implemented for the first time in the institution. Anything new has its own challenges and the greatest challenge is resistance to change.

The researchers' program also was not an exception to this. There was an initial hesitance and resistance from the faculty side to devote extra time and effort which would probably wane off with subsequent batches. The same applied to students as well. They would open up more to the teachers as time passes. One more limitation of the study was that the number of FGDs were less due to lack of time. More FGDs could have been organized to get a clearer picture of the program. Also as this was a relatively new medical college, there were some infrastructural limitations and some of the policies were yet to be put into place. These issues would hopefully be taken care of in the future as the institution grows and both faculty and students are gradually acquainted to the process of mentorship.

In the study by Kukreja et al. (12) one student mentioned that the mentor is second mother to him. Interestingly in this study also one student mentioned the same during FGD. With the help of Mentorship program, student –teacher bond goes beyond academics and teachers start looking after their students as parent, friend, motivator and philosopher (13). In this study also the researchers found that mentors and mentees relation was further strengthened which would probably help the students perform better in future and also help them gain a wholesome development beyond academics.

Limitations of the Study:

1. Only first professional MBBS students were included in the study and therefore, the sample size was small.
 2. As it was a relatively new medical college, there were some infrastructural limitations and some of the policies were yet to be put into place.
 3. FGDs conducted were less in number due to shortage of time. A greater number of FGDs involving both the mentors and the mentees would have given a clearer and a broader picture regarding the entire program.
- However, one of the strengths of the current study was that we could include the perceptions of both the mentees and the mentors regarding the program, unlike many other similar studies where only the mentees perceptions are taken into account for evaluation of the program. In such cases, the evaluation remains incomplete and a wholesome picture regarding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the said program is not clearly evident. In conclusion, the mentor-mentee relationship is based on mutual trust, respect, and a willingness to learn and share. In this study, both mentors and mentees agreed that

mentorship program is essential for betterment of students particularly in first year of their MBBS course. Therefore, the authors conclude this study with the following recommendations, which, according to us, will help in implementation and sustenance of a mentorship program:

1. A structured framework of the program should be in place for every mentor to follow. This should include the frequency of meetings with mentees, records of mentees to be monitored, preferred timings and venue for meetings etc. This will bring uniformity in implementation of the program and especially help the faculty members who would be doing it for the first time.
2. Faculty members should be constantly encouraged to participate in such programs by apprising them regarding the benefits of this program as the sustainability of the mentoring program requires continued motivation of faculty members involved.
3. Students should be made to realize the opportunity that

they have been provided with and should be inspired to make full utilization of the same, in order to have an all-round development of them.

4. Finally, it has to be kept in mind that mentorship program is not a smooth journey. Both mentor and mentee may face a lot of problems, but they have to overcome such difficulties together and proceed hand-in-hand in order to become better individuals.

Ethical considerations

Ethical issues including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, redundancy, etc. have been completely observed by the authors.

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