

THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORSHIP IN A YOUNG PHYSICIAN'S CAREER

As a young endocrinologist just out of fellowship I was faced with a myriad of questions regarding career choice, job location, compensation, contract negotiation etc. which were daunting to say the least. I always imagined that my transition from a fellow to practitioner would be seamless after all as a senior fellow I was practically running the clinic and service however that was not the case. Unfortunately there is hardly any structure or guidelines to help you in this phase, akin to the ACGME guidelines for fellowship.

Mentoring in medicine is as old as medicine itself. Mentors as compared to supervisors focus on individual needs and provide personalized advice for the all-round development of the mentee. Also, mentors tend not have a conflict of interest making the interaction with the mentee a more objective one. One of the most important steps is choosing the right mentor. While expertise in your chosen area is necessary, make sure the mentor has interest and commitment necessary for the relationship to succeed. As a mentee you need to have clear expectations and goals to make best use of the mentorship. Mentoring needs change over time and expectations and goals need to be modified accordingly.

AACE has a formal mentorship program available to its members. Unlike some mentorship programs where you are assigned a mentor, here you are allowed to choose your mentor (provided it is acceptable to the mentor as well). There is a diversity of mentors in terms of their backgrounds, types of practices and areas of expertise. This allows one to choose mentors who would be the best fit.

I enrolled in the program as a 2nd year fellow and am still in regular touch with my mentor. He played an influential role in my transition from a fellow to junior faculty. Typically we talk once a month but correspond by email more frequently. We have discussed a whole host of topics including career path, job negotiation, networking with other experts, balance of family and professional life, dealing with hostile patient, and many more. Under his guidance I definitely have obtained a clearer picture of my career aims and ways to achieve them.

I have no doubt that having a mentor helped me progress along my chosen career path. I would strongly recommend fellows and young physicians to make use of this mentorship program.