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## MENTORING – A FORM OF EDUCATION OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

A. Andonova\*

Department of Health Care, Medical Faculty, Thrakia University, Stara Zagora

### ABSTRACT

The professional education of medical specialists is a specific way of teaching for acquiring professional skills. The practical education of the students is based on team work. The team work involves students, teachers and mentors. The purpose of mentoring is to transfer the best experience of the mentor to the students while working individually. The mentoring has proven to be one of the best and flexible methods for training specialists in all professional spheres.

**Key words:** mentor, mentoring, student, practical education.

Mentoring can be presented as an interactive process between two or more persons in which one of them has personal advantage in a particular sphere and exercises qualification and professional influence upon the thinking, behaviour and actions of the other person.

A mentor is an individual who guides another person to realise successfully one's professional duties. The relations between the mentor and the student can be described as voluntary

In the modern world the words mentor and mentoring become more and more popular.

According The Common State Requirements for gaining nursing major in force as of 01.09.2006, Art. 7, item 3, the clinical training of the students is realised through clinical practice and pre-diploma practice placement under the supervision of persons with University Education in Nursing Major.

The professional training of medical specialists is a specific type of training for acquiring professional qualification. During the practical training at the clinical base specific skills and knowledge are acquired through manifold repetition with purpose of being mastered in the best possible way.

In a working environment, the students learn from the skills of their mentors, adapt models, attitudes and behaviour. The process allows them to assimilate the culture and the values of the already established specialists through personal contact with their colleagues.

The accumulation of experience in the process of clinical training and its transformation in professional competence is a factor that effectively influences the training process and the confidence of the students in their own qualities and professional capabilities.

The purpose of mentoring is to transfer the specific skills of the mentor to his/her students while applying individual approach. Mentoring has proven to be one of the most appropriate and flexible methods for training staff in all professional directions.

Mentoring is an interactive process that creates a close connection between different personalities – the teacher/mentor and the student. T. Popov examines these relations on the basis of "mutual trust and respect as the main condition for the creating active subject-subjective relations in the training process"(1). The author emphasizes the specific role of the personal example of the trainer, the professional and human qualities and the positive influence of the environment of fellow students in the training group.

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\*Correspondence to: Stara Zagora, 11 "Armeiska" Str., Thracian University, Medical Faculty, Health Cares Department, Albena Andonova, e-mail: [andonova\\_a@dir.bg](mailto:andonova_a@dir.bg)

In the training of nurses the role of the trainer/mentor is performed by the lecturer during the first year of education and by the medical specialists at the training base during the clinical practice placement. Hr. Milcheva highlights professionalism, responsibility, organisation, etc. as some of the most important qualities of the lecturer. (2). These should be possessed by the mentor, too.

The practical training of the students is based on team work. The sides in the team are the students, the lecturers and the mentors. Everybody's efforts must be directed to the formation of the future health care specialists. G. Petrova says that communication between the students as a group and with mentors and lecturers on the other hand creates skills for adequate and professional attitude to the patients (1).

In the process of mentoring experience, skills and competence are a very important resource. A clear definition of the positions and the levels of communication, trust and partnership between the two sides are the basis of relationship. During the practical work of the students at the clinical base the mentor is the central figure of the teaching. His/Her main task is to help the student understand particular manipulations, activities, style of behaviour, etc.

The training of the students must be organised on the basis of the permanent requirement to attain good results. The most important task of the trainer is to place the students in situations, which support the faster assimilation of the material, to give tasks relevant to their level of training. Working according to a plan developed in advance assists the process of education. To turn work into training means to define and prepare a series of work tasks, to give the students the opportunity to perform them under supervision and to provide for feedback on the quality of performance. The mentor is supposed to introduce the students to the most common mistakes and omissions in specific situations and the principles for their overcoming, to help for the formation of skills and habits for observing the rules of good medical practice. In case of emergency situations in the process of work, the mentor is required to assign new tasks supporting the formation of skills for response to emergency cases. Due to the specific features of the profession of nurse, maternity nurse, rehabilitator, lab assistant, etc. the advantage in

the practical training is given to methods aimed at practical assimilation of the profession such as: different types of instructions, demonstrations, consulting, delegation of tasks, support, assimilation, discussions, conversation, role play, situations, simulations, etc. These methods are widely applied during the practical and theoretical classes during the whole education process.

The efficiency of practical teaching with a mentor depends on the extent to which the mentor is acquainted with the knowledge and skills of the students. If the starting level of knowledge is properly ascertained, as well as the skills and experience of the students during the clinical practice, this will help for stirring the interest and expectations of the trainees. This raises the interest of the students to the profession and the skilled guidance facilitates the assimilation of new knowledge and formation of professional skills.

For a training process to be efficient, control and evaluation must be performed, being the factors with positive influence on the quality of training. The evaluation ascertains the degree to which the individual achievements of the student correspond to the stated tasks. Evaluation helps the mentor organise the training in a better way while directing and providing stimulus to the trainee. This gives the student the opportunity to estimate his/her educational achievements and the degree of accomplishment of the personal educational objectives. Control and evaluation are performed during the whole training course. They have a diagnostic and corrective purpose. Evaluation can be exercised while performing a certain activity, work stage or at the end of the practical training. Evaluation shows the relation between what has been achieved and the desired level of acquiring knowledge and skills.

With a purpose of establishing a connection between the student, the lecturer and the mentor during practical education of health care students a diary has been introduced. The diary (portfolio) helps for the organisation, conduction and the reporting the activities done by the student during the working day, semester, placement. The educational portfolio is intended for the student to support his/her development, as well as to assist the lecturer in diagnosing the student's achievements. The portfolio lists the various types of medical manipulations and activities, prepared in advance by the mentors, which the students have to acquire in the process of their clinical training. The student performs self-evaluation but also the opinion of the mentor is expressed.

The participation of the students along with their lecturers and mentors in the planning, realisation, evaluation and correction of the knowledge and skills during the practical training, creates prerequisites for certain freedom in the choice of performing specific medical activities. This is useful for the self-establishment and independence of the future health specialists, builds their habits for team work, ability to take personal responsibility, diversifies their educational needs and strengthens their humanistic moral system.

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