

Do Internal Medicine Advanced Practice Providers Perceive a Benefit in Mentorship?

Dear Editor:

Mentorship programs across medicine have shown multiple benefits, including increased professional satisfaction and retention, participation in academic scholarship, and development of leadership skills.¹ Historically, opportunities for advancement to faculty positions within academic institutions have not existed for advanced practice providers (APPs); however, the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) is changing that. Faculty promotion typically requires involvement in scholarly work, research, and education. APP education models focus on clinical knowledge and work, offering limited exposure to research and publication, with the goal of filling clinical shortages. Therefore, APPs rarely participate in academic scholarship early in their careers.² Recent studies show the first 3 to 5 years of an academic provider's career are the most important in developing research and publishing skills, because after that time, they are often recruited by other nonacademic organizations.³

In January 2023, an anonymous Qualtrics survey was sent to all 61 APPs in the Division of General Internal Medicine at MCW to assess their perception of mentorship among general internal medicine APPs. A total of 50 APPs completed the survey, with a response rate of 81% (64% hospitalists, 14% primary care, 14% perioperative medicine, and 8% observation unit). Ninety percent of respondents were female, and 62% had less than 5 years of experience as an APP. About 90% of APPs said mentorship was important, and of those who have had a mentor, 74% reported finding it beneficial. Perceived benefits of mentorship included advancing clinical knowledge, gaining skills for precepting students, and building your CV for career advancement and leadership opportunities. Perceived barriers to mentorship included time constraints, mentor availability, and lack of structured mentorship program. Regarding structure preference in a mentorship program, 74% of APPs prefer a mentor from the same section; and 26% prefer APP to APP, 20% prefer MD to APP, and 26% prefer mixed APP and MD to APP, depending on career interests.

Based on the interest and perceived benefits, our division is developing a mentor program for APPs. Participation will be optional, and pairing mentors and mentees will be aligned with career interests. Our future work will be focused on evaluating the effectiveness of this formal program.

This mentorship model might encourage other institutions to implement similar programs to support APP career development and advancement.

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