

Overcoming the impeding influences of institutional and social factors in the mentoring process

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Received/Accepted: 26 May 2015

Key words: Mentoring ■ Personal factor ■ Individuality

Having a mentor is critical to having a successful career in academic medicine and requires a diligent work in finding the appropriate mentor (1), but I would add that a certain amount of luck is needed as well, as that decision will certainly affect the success of a longtime work and the future of the mentee. In my case, the decision was strongly influenced by my mentor's previous work experience, work design and the quality of our relationship.

Mentoring style and the simplicity in communication, matching visions and expectations, with all elements of good mentoring such as role modelling, guidance and advising (both on the research and on my personal growth and development), together with respect of the hierarchical nature of the mentor-mentee relationship marked the course of our mentoring process.

Therefore, despite the fact that mentoring is not isolated from the outside world and social and institutional factors have different levels of interference in the process (2), I have found the personal factor to be crucial for the success of our mentoring relationship. Besides, it helped us overcome the influences of the institutional and social factors as well.

As for the institutional level, my dissertation was based on the Cochrane reviews and despite the assertive view of Cochrane reviews as original research and their official acceptance as a PhD thesis, during my mentoring process, my mentor and I encountered obstacles from colleagues in terms of misunderstanding of the value of such type of research. This in turn prolonged, but fortunately did not affect the final result of our mentoring process. Active engagement by the heads of our doctoral study, their exceptional work and efforts, regular advice, and great communication were of great help and are hugely responsible for the success of our mentoring process.

Additionally, as a full time clinician it was sometimes difficult to combine my clinical work and the everyday needs and expectations of my patients with teaching and research. Good relationship with my mentor together with regular support from

the heads of the doctoral study have helped me deal with that.

In the context of social levels of interference in the mentoring process, the mentor's encouragement of my individuality and my ability to take 'the driver's seat', as nicely said in the Canadian study (3), with constant supervision and help made me learn a lot and manage competently our research with all its components.

A mentor's uncompromising attitude towards research integrity and fair conduct of the research process are, in addition to other things which I have benefited from in this relationship, an extremely valuable foundation for my future.

Conflict of interest: The author of the comment was a mentee of the author of the article.

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