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13 The Role of Gender in Mentorship: A Study of the Tiered Mentorship Program in Emergency Medicine

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Background: Mentorship is important for professional growth. Despite the fact that greater than 90% of all residents agree that mentorship is important, only about 40% of medical students have identified a mentor. The Ohio State University College of Medicine has an established tiered-mentorship program that incorporates students, residents, and faculty into groups (Kman, et al. TLM 25:4, 2013). Female trainees are less likely to identify a mentor and mentorship programs for women are rare.

Objective: Knowing that gender can influence mentorship, we investigated the impact of assigning gender-congruent groups on the perceived value of the program.

Methods: Groups were composed of at least one faculty member, one resident, one or more fourth-year medical students, and junior medical students of all years. Twelve groups were formed. Three of the 12 groups were comprised solely of females, while two of the groups were male exclusive. The remaining groups were formed based on common interests, prior mentor relationship, and included both genders.

Results: 93 students, 16 residents, and 17 faculty members participated in the program. 67 of 93 students (72.0%) responded to the survey. At the onset of this year’s program, only 34.4% of students reported having a mentor, whereas after the program most confirmed that they had a mentor (72.3%). A majority (63%) disagreed with the statement that the gender distribution of their group contributed to their experience, as well as disagreed that they wanted a faculty mentor of their gender (86.4%) or a group composed of a single gender (95%).

Conclusion: While the tiered-mentorship group structure allows students to identify a faculty member mentor, the gender of this person and gender make-up of the group is less important. The primary role of gender was not perceived to be of value to students. Our findings led to the establishment of all mixed gender groups for this academic year.

Figure 1. Response to “I would prefer to be part of a group composed of only members of my gender.”

