

The Clinical Mentor: Roles and Guidelines

The mentor is an important key to a successful trainee experience. The clinical mentor must take an active role by working closely with the trainee (student, resident, fellow, post-doc) to provide guidance, training, support, help define a strong career development plan, and serve as a role model for the trainee. The following description of the mentor's role and guidelines for serving in that role are offered to provide assistance:

What does a superior mentor do?

- The mentor must ensure frequent interaction with the trainee. Schedule regular meetings with the trainee to make sure that he/she understands all expectations and to monitor the progress toward his/her educational, clinical and career development goals.
- The mentor needs to be able to speak frankly with the trainee to address problems and obstacles to progress early and to work together with the trainee to put solutions into place earlier rather than later in the process.
- The mentor should assist the trainee in developing a plan to master clinical knowledge, acumen, and technical skills to achieve mastery in the field of clinical oncology.
- The mentor must provide a range of appropriate experiences for the trainee: clinic planning meetings, departmental seminars, journal clubs, relevant didactic courses, leadership development opportunities etc.
- The mentor should constantly encourage and assist the trainee to make progress on mastering clinical practice in the context of a strong career development plan to achieve excellence as a leader in clinical oncology.
- The mentor should create opportunities to introduce the trainee to thought leaders and master clinicians at other institutions, who have similar interests.
- The mentor should provide assessment and constructive feedback, and document the trainee's clinical progress and performance.
- Consequently, the clinical mentor must work in an environment with sufficient resources to offer a trainee an enriching experience throughout his/her fellowship.

Evaluation of Mentor by the Trainee

Intellectual Growth and Development

- Encourages my imagination and creativity
- Encourages my inventiveness including the identification of new research topics, discovery of new techniques, and development of a strong career development plan
- Helps me develop my capacity for logical reasoning and my ability to draw logical inferences from observation, experimental data, clinical data with translation to clinical application
- Helps me to be critical and objective concerning my own results and ideas

Clinical Knowledge and Acumen

- Demonstrates how to adapt to learning as a fellow and junior clinical faculty
- Takes steps to improve my ability to conceive explanatory hypotheses and design critical tests of such hypotheses in the setting of clinical trials and emerging multidisciplinary clinical pathways
- Provides constructive feedback on my treatment plans
- Provides thoughtful advice on how to build and grow a successful oncology practice

Professional Career Development

- Provides counsel for important professional decisions
- Is instrumental in building my professional networks
- Provides guidance on professional ethics
- Promotes collegial relationships with professional community
- Helps me to envision a career plan and how to execute that plan
- Provides guidance on finding a job
- Provides guidance on a full range of career options

Academic Guidance

- Provides sound advice on my academic goals relative to my career plans
- Discusses pitfalls in my academic growth
- Encourages and creates opportunities for me to become familiar with master clinicians from other institutions

Skill Development

- Takes steps to develop my planning and organization, communication, teaching and team leadership skills
- Provides instruction and constructive feedback on presentation skills
- Provides instruction and constructive feedback on technical clinical skills

Personal Communication

- Listens carefully to my concerns
- Keeps in touch on my progress
- Takes into account gender, ethnic, and cultural issues
- Takes a respectful attitude toward my interests and work
- Provides feedback in a timely fashion
- Provides feedback on my communications with patients, nursing, staff, and other members of the multidisciplinary team