PP-22: Study to describe key components required in a mentoring program that impact the success of the mentoring process

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Introduction: Mentoring is considered as a fundamental component of a mentee's personal and professional development. Understanding the needs of the mentee, the nature of the profession, and their experience in mentoring is necessary for a successful mentoring process and to improve mentoring relationships. This preliminary analysis was carried out to understand requirements of academics and professionals in order to design a training program on mentoring. The surveys assessed the areas in which the target population expected guidance from a mentor in order to improve their performance in their academic careers.

Methods: The sample included academic professionals and alumni staff of the University of Colombo. Data were collected from participants who attended a pre-congress (Colombo Medical Congress-CMC) workshop in academic mentoring in January 2020, using a self-administered questionnaire. Thirty-six respondents aged 28-74 years, participated.

Results: Participants identified many areas as important components in a mentoring session [support in professionalism (n=15/36; 47%), research (n=11/36; 31%), academic life (n=11/36; 31%), personal life (n=8/36; 22%), skill development (n=8/36; 22%), motivation (n=7/36; 19%), and mental health (n=6/36; 17%). The graduates (n=5/36; 14%) mentioned improvement of academic life (n=3/5; 33.3%) and personal life (n=3/5; 33.3%) as their preponderant interests, while the postgraduates (n=31/36; 86%) were interested in the improvement of knowledge on researching (n=11/31; 35.4%) and skill development (n=10/31; 32.2%). Majority requested a mentoring program for themselves (n=27/36; 75%) and their trainees (n=15/36; 42%).

Conclusions: Expectations and the interests of academics are diverse. Mentees do not expect support only for career development, but also for their personal life and wellbeing. When planning a successful mentoring process, evaluating and understanding mentees' abilities, professional and personal situations can help select more suitable mentors according to their needs. An evidence-based approach may be useful to correctly understand the requirements before designing training programs.

Keywords: needs assessment, mentoring, mentee