Author’s response to reviews

Title: High Enthusiasm about Long Lasting Mentoring Relationships and Older Mentors

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Dr. Liam Messin,

Editor

BMC Medical Education

July 8, 2019

Dear Dr. Messin,

Please find enclosed our revised version of the manuscript previously entitled “High Enthusiasm about Long Lasting Mentoring Relationships and Older Mentors” which has been potentially accepted for publication in BMC Medical Education. Following the editor’s valuable comments and recommendations regarding the abstract, we expect this revised manuscript will be of interest to Medical educationalists and researchers, and particularly to researchers working on senior-junior informal interpersonal communications such as mentoring, coaching and role modelling. Based on its rapid dissemination and earlier publications on this topic, BMC Medical Education represents the perfect platform to share these results with the international research community.
We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely, also on behalf of the co-authors,

Heba Mohtady, MD

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Section/ Page number Editor’s Comment Action Taken

Rather than “daunting” suggest labor and time intensive and generally impractical in resource constrained medical schools with limited numbers of mentors. We thank the Editor for his suggestion for reformulation. Hence, we now replaced the word “daunting“ with the suggested phrase.

Abstract /see page 2 This is an assertion which is not necessarily supported by the evidence. Please remove “only” and rephrase as more likely to be effective” unless you can cite good evidence for saying “only”.

We acknowledge the view of the Editor. Therefore, this part in the Abstract was rephrased as:
Hence, informal mentoring offers a valuable alternative, but will be more likely to be effective when mentors and protégés share similar views.

Please state in Abstract that this tool was developed for the study from other validated instruments. We added this information as requested:

The questionnaire was developed for the study from other validated instruments.

Editing suggestions including 3 suggestions:
- Delete “mutual” seems contradictory
- The commas and “therefore” can be deleted
- Adding “to give “

We acknowledge the Editor’s suggestions and they were incorporated as follows:

It can be concluded that the expectations of mentors and protégés differed regarding the content and aim of the interpersonal characteristics of their mentoring relationship. We recommend mentors and protégés to more explicitly exchange their expectations of the informal mentoring relationship as typically practiced in formal mentoring. Additionally, in our study seniority and lasting relationships seem crucial for good informal mentoring. It appears beneficial to foster lasting informal mentoring relationships and to give more guidance to younger mentors.

Clarifying expectations is a standard practice in mentoring programs what your study may add is that this is also needed for informal mentoring program. We thank the Editor for this suggestion and clarify this issue as follows in the Conclusion of the Abstract:

We recommend mentors and protégés to more explicitly exchange their expectations of the informal mentoring relationship, as typically practiced in formal mentoring.

Abstract /see page 2&3

Replace “would be “with “appears” in the following:

We changed this according to your advice. It has been incorporated as follows:
Additionally, seniority and lasting relationships seem crucial for good informal mentoring in our study because it appears to be beneficial to foster lasting informal mentoring relationships and to give more guidance to younger mentors.

Methods Friendship is not the same as mentoring - do you explain in your methods why this domain was included in a mentoring instrument? We agree with the Editor that friendship is not the same as mentoring. However, it represents a crucial part of the interpersonal relationship between mentors and protégés. Therefore, it is included in the mentoring instrument as follows:

According to Noe (1988)
- My mentor has invited me to join him/her for lunch.
- My mentor has interacted with me socially outside of work.
  According to Ragins & Mcfarlin (1990)
- My mentor is someone I can confide in.
- My mentor provides support and encouragement.
- My mentor is someone I can trust.

Discussion / pages 14, 15 & 17 Please comment on the strong cultural influence that this likely to have on the mentoring relationship in the background and discussion. This may include respect for authority and hierarchical relationships, gendered relationships. Comment should be made on how this is likely to be different for western cultures, bearing in mind this is an international audience.

We thank the Editor for this suggestion and, accordingly, the following was added to Discussion:
On page (14):

Mentorship could present itself in different patterns. Among these patterns, the hierarchical relationship between senior and junior members represents the commonly encountered model (45). Cultural differences include differences in styles of learning, expression of thoughts, and perceptions of different forms of relationships. For instance; perception of hierarchy in academia differs as candidates might be disinclined to speak up out of culturally expected respect for the senior individuals, or to consider ‘listening’ as a more suitable attitude to learning (46,47).

On page (15):

A meta-analysis was conducted by O'Brien et al. (2010) to address mentoring relationships from the perspective of gender differences between mentors and protégés. According to this study, males described giving more advice on career development than female mentors. Female mentors conveyed providing more psychosocial support than male mentors. There were no gender differences for protégés regarding career development, However, male protégés stated obtaining less psychosocial support than female protégés (49).

On page (17):

or in case of seniority in different cultures.

Conclusions in both the abstract and at the end of the article/page 2&17 This is another strong assertion which is not evident in other literature on mentoring. Seniority may seem crucial for the study’s particular context only (e.g. deference for authority and hierarchy). Please moderate this assertion We reformulated this statement in the Conclusion of the Abstract, by explicitly stating that this was found in our study. We also reformulated it in the conclusion as follows:

Moreover, perceptions of both mentors and protégés improved with age and the duration of the mentoring relationship in our study.