

Psychiatrist's Role In Learning Communities



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Introduction

Many US medical schools have established learning communities (LC's) but their organization and faculty roles vary. Faculty roles consist of combinations of advising, teaching, counseling, and mentoring. Faculty specialty also varies. Some schools employ only one specialty. Others draw on faculty from multiple specialties. Our aim is to describe special challenges and benefits psychiatrists bring to a mentor role.

Program Description

Learning communities at the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) consist of 5 vertically integrated virtual houses, each with 4 faculty mentors. The mentor position is 0.25 FTE consisting of academic and career advising, small group teaching, personal mentoring relationships with students, and weekly faculty development sessions. Mentors at UMMS come from internal medicine, OB-GYN, emergency medicine, family medicine, pediatrics, nephrology, geriatrics, and psychiatry.

Teaching Physical Exam

- New psychiatrist mentors have to invest time reviewing physical exam skills. During this time it is important for the mentor not to be defensive with students as this was disquieting to students.
- The learning community itself facilitates this learning.



- Students were aware of their psychiatrist mentor's skill level, yet recognized they brought other strengths to the sessions.
- *"My mentor was extremely helpful during PD2. I feel like that was the experience that I learned the most from. He gave us a very humanistic way in which to gather the patient's story in a way that I had never seen done before."*

Boundary Issues



- Psychiatrist mentor – student dyads did not have difficulty maintaining appropriate boundaries
- Psychiatrist mentors were a resource to other mentors regarding maintaining appropriate boundaries.

Consultation



- Psychiatrist mentors offer valuable insights to other mentors dealing with challenging student issues during case presentations in "mentoring the mentor" faculty development sessions.

Integration Agenda



- Student evaluations of psychiatrist mentors are on a par with other mentors.
- Diversity in the mentors should represent diversity in med/surg specialties, as well as the diversity of the student body
- Including psychiatrists as mentors implicitly promotes integrated behavioral and physical health, a priority in healthcare reform.

Bibliography

W. Brad Johnson and Charles R. Ridley (2008). *The Elements of Mentoring* (rev. ed.). New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, Palgrave and Macmillan