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IN BRIEF REPORT

Developing Mentoring Competency: Does a One Session Training Workshop Have Impact?

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Abstract
Objective Mentorship remains vital to the career development, research productivity, and professional advancement of healthcare professionals in all disciplines of academic medicine. Recent studies describe mentor training initiatives aimed at increasing mentoring competency through multisession training curricula. Although the published results of these programs are promising, they require the following: (1) substantial financial resources from the institution, and (2) continuous participation and time commitment from faculty, which may reduce participation and effectiveness.
Method A single, half-day of evidence-based mentor training would represent a more cost-effective and accessible option for educating mentors. The present study investigates the impact of a half-day interactive mentor training workshop on mentoring competency in faculty, staff, and trainees of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University.
Results Overall, participants' self-reported mentoring competency mean scores were significantly higher post-workshop compared to pre-workshop ratings [mean = 4.48 vs. 5.02 pre- and post-workshop, respectively; $F(1, 31) = 18.386$, $P < 0.001$, $\eta_{p2} = 0.37$]. Survey respondents gave positive feedback and reported greater understanding of mentorship and specific mentoring changes they planned to apply after attending the workshop.
Conclusion Academic and healthcare institutions may use this framework to guide the development of a half-day mentoring workshop into their education programs.

Keywords Mentor · Mentoring competency · Mentor workshop · Mentoring program

Research has demonstrated the importance of mentorship for professional development, balancing of professional and personal demands, and research productivity [1]. Although substantial benefits have been ascribed to mentorship, it has been given surprisingly little support in the majority of academic and healthcare institutions [2]. In a national survey of mentoring programs, only 13 out of 46 institutions initiated various forms of mentor training ranging from half-day workshops to multisession curricula [3]. Given the importance of mentorship to individual faculty and departments as a whole, academic and healthcare institutions should provide a supportive environment that actualizes the institution's commitment to the role of mentorship by providing adequate resources for mentors to develop their competence.

One potential method by which resources can be delivered to mentors is the provision of in-session mentorship training. In a multisite study evaluating the impact of a multisession mentor training curriculum, mentors participating in the program reported significant increases in mentoring competencies post-intervention as measured by the validated Mentoring Competency Assessment (MCA) scale compared to controls who did not participate in the training program [4]. While these results are promising, multisession programs may not be feasible for institutions with modest budgets that cannot support the implementation of ongoing mentor training and/or provide financial incentives to mentors for attendance.

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Moreover, continuous time commitment may not be pragmatic for faculty with numerous other professional demands.

A half-day, single session mentoring workshop initiated by institutions offers an alternative to ensure mentorship training is accessible across a broader community of mentors. Not only can the session foster awareness of the importance of mentorship in a large group of mentors, mentoring tools and structured training can enhance a mentor's confidence in their own mentoring skills, leading to greater confidence when facilitating the learning process of mentees [5]. Thus, the development of a mentoring program should be tailored towards building mentoring confidence and self-perceived competency. While most single session workshops solely assess satisfaction with the program, this is the first half-day mentoring workshop to our knowledge that uses a validated scale to measure change in mentoring competency. In this study, we aim to demonstrate the effectiveness of a time-efficient half-day workshop designed to increase mentors' confidence, skill level, and knowledge.

Methods

The half-day mentor training opportunity was held in December of 2014 at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, a large academic hospital, and made available to all interested faculty, staff, and healthcare trainees in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences (DPBN) at McMaster University. An internationally recognized leader in mentorship and professional development provided a keynote presentation and led the workshop that presented three learning objectives: (1) enhance the understanding of mentorship and expand general knowledge on the topic, (2) provide methods to raise difficult issues and concerns in a mentoring relationship, and (3) highlight different needs when mentoring learners of different gender, cultural, and generational backgrounds.

These objectives were explored through PowerPoint slides, small-group discussion, and interactive practical demonstrations. Participants were asked to provide suggestions regarding ways to initiate difficult conversations. Participants interacted in pairs to facilitate discussion on difficult conversations that can arise in between the mentor-mentee dyad. In particular, the keynote speaker explored challenges in aligning expectations early on in the relationship and in communicating effectively with mentees of different ethnic backgrounds, gender, and age. Following this discussion, two practical demonstration scenarios depicting problems that may arise in mentoring relationships were shown to the audience. In one scenario, participants were asked to identify ways to improve effective communication through relational communication skills, including self-monitoring, inquiry and listening, and advocacy. In another scenario, participants were asked to identify ways to mentor and provide feedback to a mentee whose attitudes and preferences do not align with their own. This project was deemed a program evaluation and therefore exempted from review by the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board.

Measures

Mentoring Competency Assessment

The MCA is a reliable and validated 26-item questionnaire that assesses six mentoring competencies: communication, aligning expectations, assessing understanding, fostering independence, promoting professional development, and addressing diversity [6]. Mentors rated their mentoring skill levels on all six competencies using a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = not at all skilled, 4 = moderately skilled, 7 = extremely skilled) immediately before and after completion of the workshop.

Mentorship Knowledge Test

The Mentorship Knowledge Test is a 7-question true or false test on the content presented in the workshop. This test was created by the workshop presenter and tested knowledge specific to the content discussed in the mentoring session. Participants answered these questions immediately before and upon completion of the workshop.

Program Evaluation

An 18-question program evaluation developed by the authors assessed information on participant characteristics, overall satisfaction, value, and impact of the workshop. Questions were rated on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 7, where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 7 indicated strong agreement with the statement. Open-ended feedback was also collected.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS, version 22 (SPSS Inc, Chicago, IL). The a priori primary outcome of the study was to measure the change in self-reported Mentoring Competency Assessment pre- and post-workshop scores using a two-way ANOVA with time and each of the six competency areas as the within subject variables. Secondary outcomes included change in mentor knowledge pre- and post-workshop, which was measured using a repeated measures *t* test.

Unique identifiers were provided for qualitative responses in the program feedback. For the qualitative data analysis, the open-ended responses from each participant were reviewed by the first, second, and last author (CL, JF, RM) to identify

themes. Some general themes included aligning expectations, being mindful of cultural differences, making more time for mentoring, recognizing the importance of mentoring, and goal setting with the mentee. In addition, because the authors were directly involved in evaluating the program, two blind raters were asked to evaluate the themes and the classification of responses provided by the participants. Any differences were resolved by discussion between the authors to achieve consensus on the thematic classification.

We excluded data from respondents ($n=7$) who did not submit their post-MCA surveys before leaving the workshop. Scores on the excluded pre-MCA surveys did not significantly differ from those that were included in analyses. The mean rating of the statements in the program feedback ranked on a 7-point Likert scale was calculated. For all statistical tests, a P value of ≤ 0.05 was considered significant. Bonferroni corrections were applied to all multiple pairwise comparisons.

Results

A total of 43 faculty, staff, and healthcare trainees attended the workshop and 36 (84 %) completed the measures in paper format. Respondents represented a wide variety of disciplines within the DPBN at McMaster University, including psychiatrists ($n=9$; 28 %), psychologists ($n=13$; 36 %), psychiatry residents ($n=3$; 8 %), nurses ($n=3$; 8 %), social workers ($n=1$; 3 %), and other healthcare professional trainees including psychology residents ($n=4$), clinical clerk ($n=1$), postdoctoral fellow ($n=1$), and one unspecified healthcare trainee. Overall, this sample consists of mentors ($n=25$; 69 %) and trainees ($n=11$; 31 %) within a wide range of disciplines within psychiatry and behavioral neurosciences at a large academic healthcare institution.

Quantitative Analyses

To examine the influence of mentorship training on mentoring competencies, as measured by the MCA, individual changes in the 26 MCA items of mentoring competency were collapsed into their corresponding competencies, as described in the original article describing the psychometric properties of the MCA [6]. This allowed us to perform a 6 (mentoring competency domains) × 2 (pre/post) repeated measures ANOVA. Overall, there was effect of time, whereby participants' self-reported mentoring competency scores were significantly higher post-workshop compared to pre-workshop ratings [mean = 4.48 vs. 5.02 pre- and post-workshop, respectively; $F(1, 31)=18.4$, $P<0.001$, $\eta_{p2}=0.37$]. There was also a main effect of mentorship competency, suggesting that participants' scores varied depending on the mentoring competency domain measured [$F(5, 27)=11.8$, $P<0.001$, $\eta_{p2}=0.28$]. As illustrated in Fig. 1, there was a significant interaction between mentorship domain and pre-post scores [$F(5155)=2.5$, $P<0.003$). That is, the difference in scores pre- and post-workshop was significant only for communication, aligning expectations, promoting professional development, and addressing diversity subscores [all t's >3.191, $P\leq 0.003$]. Although all scores were originally significant at the $\alpha=0.05$ level, the increase in scores associated with assessing understanding and fostering independence was no longer significant after Bonferroni corrections ($P>0.003$).

Despite the significant changes in mentoring competencies, the increase in the measured pre- and post-mentorship knowledge test was not statistically significant [$t(27)=0.512$, $P=0.613$].

A number of findings were revealed in the evaluative statements regarding the workshop on our 18-item program evaluation. First, most respondents ($n=29$; 85 %) agreed that the program was useful in building mentoring skills and emphasized the importance of availability and quality of mentorship. Second, most participants ($n=26$; 76 %) agreed that the program introduced them to new mentoring resources and procedures and mentoring needs and practices they were not aware of in the past. Third, most participants agreed that the program enhanced their confidence as a mentor ($n=30$; 88 %) and that they would recommend this program to a colleague ($n=28$; 82 %). Lastly, this program allowed participants to feel more comfortable having difficult conversations in a mentoring relationship ($n=29$; 85 %) and expanded understanding of additional challenges that arise when working with mentees of different race, gender, and age ($n=29$; 85 %).

Qualitative Analyses

Several themes were identified in responses ($n=14$) to the open-ended question "after attending the workshop, I will make the following changes." First, survey respondents ($n=8$; 57.1 %) indicated that they recognized the importance of aligning expectations (i.e., laying out guidelines and limitations for the relationship) and setting long-term goals early on in the mentoring relationship. To illustrate this, one participant commented on making the following change:

> "Establish goals and guidelines early in the mentor mentee relationship, solicit regular feedback from my mentors and mentees, speak regularly with my mentors regarding my career goals."

Second, some participants ($n=5$; 35.7 %) recognized the importance of addressing diversity and expanding understanding on additional challenges that arise when working with mentees of different race, gender, and age. One participant commented on making the following change:

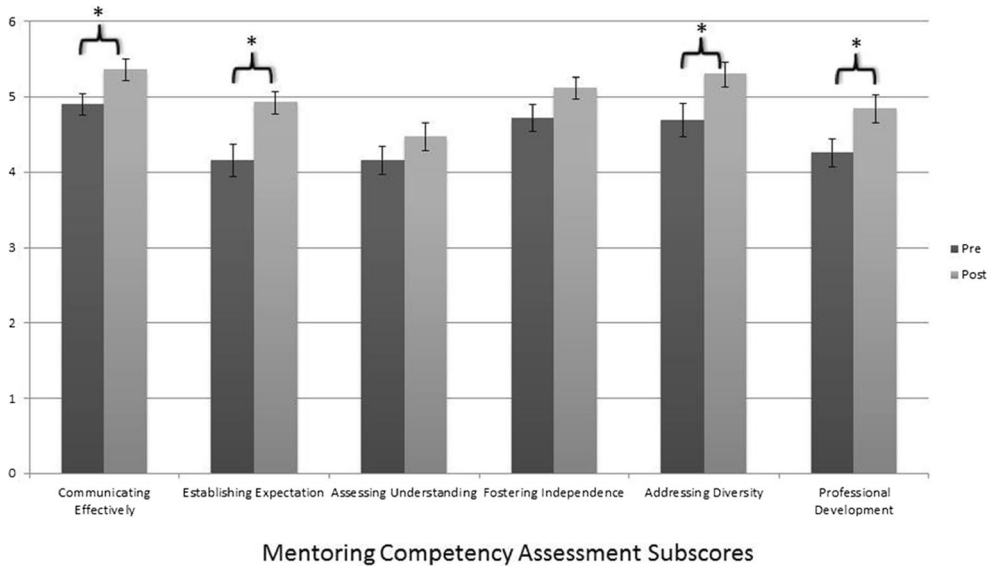

Fig. 1 Participants' increase in subscores across six mentoring competencies before and after the workshop (scale 1 to 7; 1 not at all skilled, 4 moderately skilled, 7 extremely skilled; $n = 31$). *Error bars* represent the standard error of the mean. *Represent $P \leq 0.003$

> "More mindful of cultural and socioeconomic diversity related issues. Be more sensitive to power differentials."

Lastly, participants ($n = 5$; 35.7 %) commented on making more time for their existing mentoring relationship. One participant stated:

> "Spending more time to address the needs take more time to listen and understand my mentee's concerns."

Discussion

This work suggests that a single session mentoring workshop is a feasible method by which mentoring competency can be increased. Participants reported significant and meaningful improvement in mentoring competency as indicated by the large effect size for change in overall MCA scores. Following the workshop, participants reported improvements in communication, aligning expectations, promoting professional development, and addressing diversity. The program feedback revealed high satisfaction with the workshop and self-reported increases in mentoring skill and confidence, suggesting perceived personal gains in participants' own mentoring ability. Although statistically significant increases in mentoring knowledge test scores were not seen as measured by the 7-question true or false test, participants wrote in the open-ended responses several ways that they would improve their existing mentoring relationships, indicating that participants gained insight into their mentoring relationships after attending the workshop. Overall, the mentoring workshop was well received and may develop mentoring competency in a number of measurable self-reported attributes.

This study was not without limitations. First, given our focus on the practicality and feasibility of the workshop, our study lacked a control group. Future research could involve random assignment of participants to a structured mentoring workshop or unstructured discussion on mentorship with colleagues to measure the impact of workshop content. Second, participants in the workshop represented a group of self-selected individuals who likely put greater value on mentorship, creating a potential response bias. Third, there were no measures of objective behavioral change captured in the post-workshop results or follow-up with participants after the study. Future studies should measure objective outcomes in mentee's learning following structured mentor training. Finally, our relatively small sample of participants from a single department may not generalize to all other healthcare settings.

The findings in this study are consistent with a previous randomized controlled trial showing mentor training could be beneficial in enhancing reflective learning and initiating behavioral changes in mentoring relationships [4]. Exposure to a 3-h mentoring session such as ours may "prime" mentors to be more engaged with their mentees and effectively build mentor confidence. Leaders in healthcare and academic institutions can utilize half-day, interactive mentoring training workshops to improve mentoring relationships. These workshops are appealing as they require only a modest budget and relatively little time to implement. While different academic and healthcare institutions may apply distinct mentor training tailored to their missions and learning goals, the MCA can be used as an effective means of evaluating the effectiveness of a workshop in building mentoring competencies. Future workshops may use this interactive training approach to build a half-day workshop into the curricula for faculty and staff mentors. Since participants of this workshop did not rate

themselves equally skilled across all six mentoring competencies, future mentoring programs may measure mentoring competency before training and tailor the workshop to build competencies that are rated lower to maximize the benefits of training. Future research studies might investigate booster sessions that focus on maintaining gains in mentoring competency, continuing to build competencies that did not have sufficient gains, and actualizing the self-report behavioral changes. Overall, this workshop provides an evidence-based framework for a structured, single session mentor training workshop that can enhance a mentor's confidence and skills to provide high-quality mentorship. To build on the limitations of the current study, it is recommended that future studies in this area utilize a multiple choice knowledge test (vs. true/false format) to increase variability. Future studies would also benefit from incorporation of a follow-up period to assess the ways in which training may lead to durable behavioral change in mentoring.

Implications for Educators

- Exposure to a 3-h mentoring session such as ours may "prime" mentors to be more engaged with their mentees and effectively build mentor confidence.
- Future workshops may use this interactive training approach to build a half-day mentoring workshop that increases mentoring competency into the curricula for faculty and staff mentors.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Funding None reported.

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