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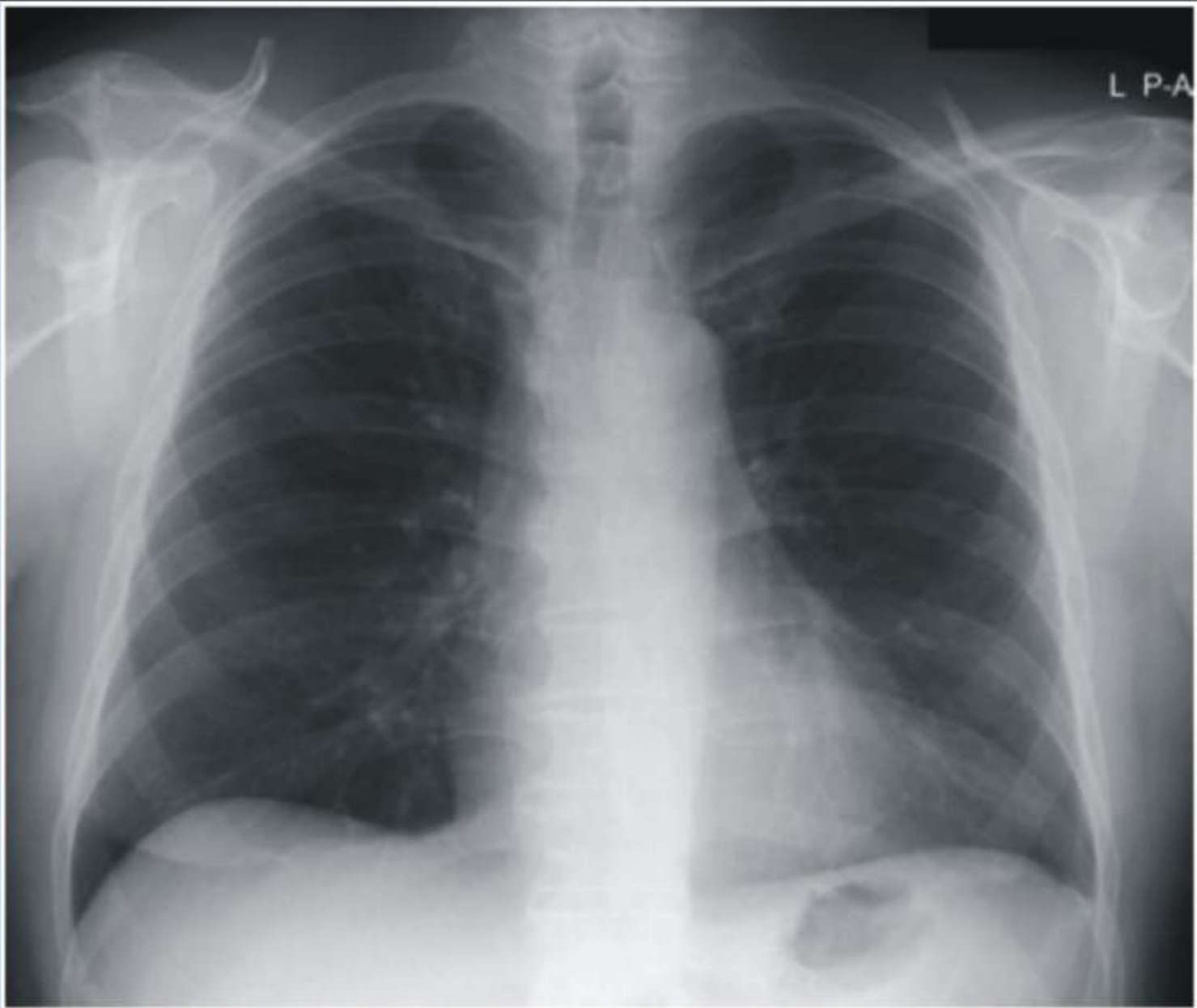
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Mentorship in Radiography: an Indispensable Tool for Sustainable Healthcare Transformation

Chigozie I. Nwobi, Geofery Luntsi, Flavious B. Nkubli, Silas A. Moi,
Matthew G. Abubakar

Department of Medical Radiography, College of Medical Sciences, University of Maiduguri, Borno State

Corresponding author: chigozienwobi@yahoo.com; +2348034545811

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ABSTRACT

Background: The concept of mentorship has gained widespread popularity in literature across different walks of life owing to the significant benefits attached to it.

Purpose: This paper intends to discuss the need for mentorship in radiography, as an indispensable tool for a sustainable healthcare transformation, taking clues from other health science disciplines and medicine.

Method: Authors reviewed relevant literature on the subject to have an in-depth and updated knowledge both in the health sciences as well as in other disciplines. Search engines such as Google Scholar, My Websearch, and data base such as Science Direct, Hinari, Taylor and Francis and Medknow were consulted. Several articles that discussed mentorship across various disciplines were reviewed. Those with ideas and concepts that fit into the purpose of the study were included.

Results: Several definitions and types of mentorship exist across different walks of life based on literature. However, we decided to adopt the definition of mentorship and types of mentorship by Feldman, who defined mentorship as a dynamic, reciprocal relationship in a work environment between an advanced career incumbent and a beginner, aimed at promoting the development of both. The uniform agreement across various disciplines is that mentoring is a crucial component of success. However, its application in radiography is inadequate.

Conclusion: In view of the apparent benefits accruable to mentorship globally, stakeholders in radiography should make mentorship a priority, if we must maintain our role in a sustainable healthcare transformation.

Key words: Mentor, Mentee, Protégée, Coaching, Radiography, Healthcare transformation

Introduction

Mentorship in recent years has received a great deal of attention as an important teaching and learning process [1,2]. The popularity of mentoring stems from the fact that one-to-one attention to learning generally yields greater results, such as motivation for higher achievement, skills development, higher retention at academic institutions, increased cultural understanding, self-efficacy and career satisfaction [3,4].

Prior research in the health sciences has shown mentorship to be a crucial component of success, and as such, an important influence on academic productivity, personal development and career guidance for students, fellows, and junior faculty members [4,5]. Consequently, there is a growing interest in developing mentoring programs for mentees at all levels of career development,[6,7] in a variety of health professional settings, [8–10] and for diverse mentors and mentees.

The concept of mentoring has been identified as an effective way to sustain and develop nursing leaders [11]. As a result of the benefits associated with mentorship, an increasing number of health sciences institutions have invested in formal mentoring programs for their faculties and trainees and some have made participation in mentoring a requirement for advancement of faculty members [4].

Bearing in mind the global paradigm shift in healthcare delivery as well as medical education,[12,13] radiographers in Nigeria must wake up to the present challenge. The healthcare system in Nigeria has experienced rapid technological advancements within the past few decades with radiography being at the forefront. If radiography must assume its rightful position and role in the ongoing healthcare transformation and also survive the next decade, then, the subject of mentorship is such that should not be treated with levity.

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Hence, this paper is aimed at exploring the concept of mentorship across various disciplines and to consider its application in radiography as an indispensable tool for a sustainable healthcare transformation. This is borne out of the need to sustain the standard for the next generation of radiographers in Nigeria and by extension in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

We therefore intend to discuss mentorship under the following headings.

What is Mentorship?

Without an in-depth understanding of the concept of mentoring, healthcare organizations cannot increase knowledge development [11]. Mentorship is a relationship that involves interaction between two people (mentor and mentee) normally working in similar fields or sharing similar experiences [7]. At present, based on a current literature search, there is no clear consensus as to what defines mentoring [13]. For many authors, it is challenging or difficult to get to a common, widely accepted definition, and most of them have acknowledged that the need for a common widely acceptable definition is really of paramount importance.

However, till a consensus is achieved on defining many of its characteristics, it is a relationship built within an organization, intended to target and focus on the training of individuals with various needs, centered on features ranging from teaching of core academic material to the everlasting phase of a person's social behavior [7].

Numerous definitions of mentorship exists in literature, however, we adopted the definition by Feldman [14], who defined mentoring as a dynamic, reciprocal relationship in a work environment between an advanced career incumbent and a beginner, aimed at promoting the development of both. He further stated that, the mentoring relationship is one of the most complex and developmentally important relationships in a person's life. Noting that, the mentor will among other things 'assist and facilitate the realization of the mentees dream'. Mentoring has been identified as a core component of medical education and career success [6].

Mentoring is an interactive, facilitative process meant to promote learning and development that is based on educational and social learning theories [15].

Mentoring has been studied largely within the context of large corporations where it is used for training and succession planning [16]. While there is no universal consensus on any particular definition or form, mentoring is typically thought of as a hierarchical relationship between a senior and a junior organizational member to help the protégé advance with the organization [15].

In healthcare, mentoring has been used for teaching students and novice nurses about clinical practice [17]. A large proportion of nurses report having one or more mentors who serve a variety of formal and informal roles. Mentorship is also recognized within the nursing literature as an important mechanism for research training in both university and clinical settings, although this has not been thoroughly evaluated [11].

From the foregoing, it is apparent that in mentorship two key parties are involved that is a mentor and a mentee. A mentor as earlier stated is a coach, advisor, teacher, guide, role model, and a counselor, usually a more advanced person within a profession or an organization, while a mentee is a recipient of the mentorship. This explanation shares similar view with that of Agwu,[18].

According to Feldman, there are three key mentors:

- Career Mentor- responsible for overall career guidance and support for their mentees.
- Research (Scholarly) Mentor- responsible for developing the creative and / or independent research careers of their mentees. Unlike the career mentor, the scholarly mentor must have expertise in the mentees area of scholarship and help provide resources to support mentees work.
- Co-mentor/ clinical mentor - works with the mentee and the scholarly mentor to provide specialized content area or methodological expertise.

Why do we need mentorship in radiography?

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The significance of mentorship in recent times is highly acknowledged through different walks of life. Especially during the early stages of any career, if provided with mentorship, people are found to have higher career satisfaction.

Effective mentorship is crucial to career success in academic medicine, just as it is also well reported in academic and clinical nursing.[9, 19]. Mentor-mentee interaction brings influence within a mentees life in a lasting way and the process of mentorship does not end with the completion of course but goes beyond till actual significance is observed when a mentee enters into his career/practical life [8].

Another reason we need mentorship is that the domain of mentorship has gained a great and important position by involving elements of emotional uplifting. Mentoring has been discussed as a strategy for positive youth development and as a deterrent of risky youth behavior [20]. Successful relationships may enable faculty to provide career and psychological support to trainees while guiding the development of professional expertise[1].

A number of similarities exist between professional development in health professions compared with other professions, hence, now a days like almost all other fields, most health professionals are also convinced that mentoring plays a vital role for the improvement and progression of their skills and career[7]. Expectations are that mentoring flourishes behavioral, motivational and career outcomes and is an effective way of helping people to progress in their careers.

Despite the widespread popularity of mentorship in other disciplines, there is paucity of literature on mentorship in radiography in Nigeria, a similar view shared by Kwatko and Watts [5] in a related study. Successful mentoring programs practiced by other health professions in resource-limited settings, such as that pioneered by the Makerere University College of Health Sciences (MAKCHS) in Uganda, [6] if properly harnessed and adopted in radiography practice in Nigeria, with proper collaboration, may bring enormous benefits.

Mentorship provides the mentee with an opportunity to think about career options and progress. A mentor is a

guide who can help the mentee to the right direction and support she or he to resolve career issues [8]. Mentors rely upon having had similar experiences to gain an empathy with the mentees and an understanding of their issues.

Mentoring is a two way process because, if it is successful, both mentor and mentee will gain considerably [7]. This fact enhances the mentor's interest to help his mentee reach his goal. Mentors also derive benefit from mentoring including satisfaction from helping others, creation of free time for alternate pursuits, organizational recognition or reward and improved job performance through exposure to new ideas [4,7]. Mentorship is needed to develop core clinical and academic skills in radiography to secure the future of our profession and to prevent it from imminent collapse.

Where do we need mentorship in radiography?

Despite the widespread popularity and acclaimed benefits accruable to mentorship across disciplines globally, as well as in some African countries, little or not much has been done in the area of mentorship in radiography in Nigeria. However, in mentoring it is critical to first identify the skills that need developing, relationships that need strengthening and best practices that need to be adopted. It is important to define needs in terms of cognitive and behavioral skills as well as emotional intelligence that need to be addressed [3].

There is dare need of mentors and mentees in radiography in Nigeria both in the clinical and academic settings to serve the private and public sectors, if radiography must survive the next decade without going into limbo [21]. The authors' point of view is that radiographers need, as a matter of urgency, to be mentored basically in the clinics and the academia. Two other areas where radiographers in Nigeria need to be mentored, as explained by Agwu, [18] in a conference presentation, are in the areas of entrepreneurship and professional unionism.

In the clinic, radiography is technologically at the cutting edge of modern medicine; hence, we need to keep pace with this advancement. Our older and more experienced senior colleagues are an asset to this profession and, as such, their wealth of experience

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gathered over the years need to be transferred to the younger generation of radiographers to sustain the transformation. We need to begin from internship by building on the foundation of undergraduate knowledge and skills.

Also, to help consolidate practical experiences in the first year post-qualification, develop effective communication skills with optimized patient care, and sustain professionalism in radiography practice, mentorship is needed.

Academic radiography is another critical area of consideration in terms of mentorship, especially these days when most universities are retaining their graduates to assume lecturing responsibilities. Hence, we have many younger generations of radiographers coming into the academia who are in dire need of mentoring so as to effectively mentor others as well. How well we fare clinically is a product of our university system, which in turn is a function of our intellectual asset base developed over the years. The academic task is a quite a challenging one, especially with the global paradigm shift in medical education with the popular slogan 'publish or perish'.

The areas we need to be mentored in academic radiography are numerous. Some of these are; proper perception of the lecturing job, what it takes to be a scholar in radiography, mentorship in further academic pursuits, sub-specialization issues, scientific writing (manuscript writing and submission), research grant proposal writing, responsible conduct of research and ethics, academic leadership and rudiments of career progression in the academia.

Conclusion

Having considered the consistent agreement in the literature and the recent global emphasis on the enormous benefits of mentorship observed in medicine, nursing as well as other health science professions, we in radiography cannot remain complacent. We need not to wait for the institutionalization of a formal mentorship program as in developed countries. We can begin from somewhere, even on a personal (one-on-one) basis, informally. We can begin, and together as prospective mentors and mentees, save the future of our dear profession.

It might be quite demanding and tasking, but it is worth the effort because we have a role to play in healthcare transformation. The authors acknowledge the fact that this review might not be extensive and exhaustive as well as not every aspect of mentorship has been explored. However, this will serve as a base for further empirical studies on the subject of mentorship in radiography in Nigeria.

Conflict of interest; Nil

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