

THE *TWO-WAY STREET* OF MENTORSHIP: BENEFITS OF MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR MENTORS

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BACKGROUND

Most mentorship programs (MP) emphasize the benefits for mentees^{1,2} and the necessary mentor characteristics and skills (positive role model, enthusiasm, listening and guidance capacities)³ but it is important to recognise that mentoring is a *two-way street* showing many advantages for the mentors themselves^{3,4}. The common definition of *mentor*⁵ includes *volunteer* and *unpaid*; a similar paid support person is known as consultant/advisor. Mentors are motivated by their interest and gratification in helping others to develop. Mentors need to enjoy and feel rewarded by the experience. Evidence of benefits for them serves to encourage professionals to participate as mentors in mentoring programs.

Since 2018, an e-MP is active in the Master in Pediatric Physiotherapy (PPT), University of Florence, Italy to support the post-graduate physiotherapy students during their 2-year clinical specialization¹. All selected volunteer mentors have completed the Master course and are employed as pediatric physiotherapists (PPt).

OBJECTIVES

To determine if the opinions of experienced PPt mentors on the benefits of the role correspond to the benefits declared in literature.

METHOD

A January-February 2026 email survey is being concluded, enrolling all mentors participating in the four 2018-2025 mentoring programs within the PPT Master at Florence University. The questionnaire with likert scale 1 (*strongly disagree*) - 5 (*strongly agree*) + *optional considerations* investigates their opinions on five main benefits for mentors reported in literature^{3,4,5}.

RESULTS

All 21 PPt mentors in the e-MP (age: 30-46 years, mean age 41 years; employment: 3 hospital, 15 community service, 3 rehabilitation centres) were enrolled. The total of 45 *level of satisfaction and enjoyment* end-of-project evaluations gathered show 87% on maximum positive likert score 5.

Preliminary survey results on mentors' opinions of benefits outlined in literature show positive 5 likert scores: *enhance communication skills* (100%); *enhance leadership skills* (86%); *support personal growth and fulfilment* (86%); *expand professional networking* (71%); *promote mutual learning and new professional perspectives* (71%). Optional individual comments on being a mentor are enriching: "you rediscover yourself", "transforms knowledge to understanding", "opens up new horizons", "increases enthusiasm+++", "a precious experience for comparison and reflexion"; "more attention/appreciation of others and yourself".

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that experienced mentors are in agreement with the benefits of the role expressed in literature. Highlighting evidence-based positive advantages can support motivation for enrolment of PPts as mentors in mentoring programs as support to fellow colleagues' professional development, accepting that turnover is physiological, and positive to allow other colleagues to have the experience of being a mentor.

Keywords: mentoring; mentor; benefits, physiotherapy education

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