

Introduction

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The format of this book

Mentorship provides a unique opportunity for healthcare personnel to influence the next generation of professionals and ultimately the development of their specific profession. Mentor preparation training programmes, and the subsequent annual mentor updates that are required by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2008a) help mentors to gain an awareness of the role and to maintain currency of their knowledge. Therefore, the fascination of mentorship lies with the challenges that the role entails and the realization that the mentor needs to see mentorship from both perspectives – the mentor and the student.

The rationale for producing this book is to capitalize on experiences gained while supporting mentors who undertake mentor training and subsequently are proactive in maintaining their own mentor update. In August 2006, the NMC introduced their document, *Standards to Support Learning and Assessment in Practice: NMC Standards for Mentors, Practice Teachers and Teachers* with the intention that the content would influence all mentor preparation training programmes as from September 2007. Therefore, this book explores those recommendations and offers an interpretation of their implementation, focusing on the second edition of the standards printed in July 2008.

Despite the focus relating specific to nursing and midwifery, the intention is to adopt a more generic interprofessional throughout by comparing the NMC (2008a) guidelines with those stated by the Health Professions Council (HPC) (2007a; 2007b). The ideology of contemporary healthcare encourages a professional partnership between nursing, midwifery and the supporting allied professions as all those involved in delivering care will contribute to the patient's healthcare journey. The more effective this interrelatedness is and the more coherent the understanding of each health profession's role, the more effective the care given to the patient should be.

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The aim of this book therefore is to reflect on that nursing, midwifery and health professions alliance and how each healthcare professional undertakes a vital role throughout the patient's experience of healthcare. In order to assist healthcare students to understand their role while in the practice placement, they will be assigned a mentor, who is a registered nurse, midwife or health professional registrant. All healthcare professions undertaking their role are guided by the recommendations stipulated by the Nursing and Midwifery Council for nurses and midwives or the Health Professions Council for other allied profession registrants. This professional partnership should lead to a safe and successful healthcare experience for the patient throughout their medical journey, irrespective of the specific pathway.

Throughout the book, the term 'healthcare student' will be adopted in order to present a generalized approach applicable to nursing, midwifery and allied health professions. There is a belief that although the guidelines are from the NMC, a more generalized appreciation of the content should be addressed, so the contrast with the HPC will be emphasized where applicable, in order to promote this book as a useful educational resource for all professionals who mentor healthcare students.

Throughout this book the underpinning ideology is to examine the roles and responsibilities of the mentor, and how they enhance the process of mentorship. Each chapter will adopt a generalised approach focused on the chapter title, the discussion will highlight how these general principles and practices of mentorship can be transferable to nursing, midwifery or other health professionals. A number of underpinning theoretical concepts are identified throughout that are based on traditional theories or knowledge generated from significant research studies. Therefore, irrespective of the specialist profession of the healthcare student, the book will offer some generic principles that will provide a starting point to enhance the transition from a registered nurse or midwife to a qualified mentor.

Overview of the chapters

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the mentor's role, its adoption and development in the education of healthcare professionals. It will examine the qualities and skills of an effective mentor and, conversely, discuss the complexities of mentorship. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (2006a) specified the eight domains for mentorship that should be introduced nationally and used from a generalised perspective as from September 2007. The revised domains (NMC, 2008a) will be presented as the linchpin throughout each chapter because of their generic implications.

However, this book is not intended for nurses or midwives alone. It is hoped that while much of the background is from a nursing and midwifery origin, it will also be useful to other health profession registrants. Therefore, reference will be made throughout to the Health Professions Council (2007a). The common denominator for all professions is the need to examine and explore the working relationships in the healthcare setting, based on mutual trust and respect. The focus of Chapter 2 will highlight the importance of group dynamics, and the significance of individual inter-personal variables on the impact of mentorship. The topic of communication and inter-personal skills is usually one of the first topics that the student nurse encounters during their first few weeks of basic nurse training. However, the importance of this subject is also pertinent to midwifery and other health professions. This chapter will offer a brief review of some significant intra-personal concepts including attitudes, emotions, and the self-concept. These may be some of the main topics discussed in pre-registration programmes or part of mentor training because they can also be related to the understanding of the relationship between the mentor and the healthcare student. Mentors may wish to consider these topics if they are trying to understand their student's behaviour – this could be a useful starting point.

One of the most accredited responsibilities of mentors, irrespective of specific profession, is their ability to facilitate learning for healthcare students. Chapter 3 will examine the process of learning and the associated underpinning theoretical concepts. In order to assist mentors to understand the individuality of their student's approach to learning, the concepts of learning styles, learning theories, and what enhances or inhibits learning, will be considered. Throughout this chapter, the discussion will focus on a number of significant concepts that can also offer an explanation of mentorship. It is important for mentors to explore their own practice placement and objectively evaluate its effectiveness in encouraging self-directed learning for adult learners before they consider another integral function of mentorship, the assessment of learning.

In Chapter 4, the process of mentorship will be explored, highlighting that mentors are expected to assess their students using criterion referencing – a set of competencies, outcomes or proficiencies that have been established by an academic governing body. The chapter will discuss the process of assessment using a five-dimensional model that has been designed to assist mentors in the practice placements. The process of assessment should be objective but, unfortunately, for several reasons, there are a number of associated complexities. The reasons why assessments may be problematic will be examined and this will encourage mentors to review their own

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assessment skills in an attempt to ensure that they are not being subjective. Assessment is a challenge for mentors but nevertheless is certainly one of the most rewarding aspects inherent in the role. This Chapter includes a number of activities, scenarios and frequently asked questions that highlight that mentorship is challenging for both mentor and the healthcare student. From a nursing perspective, the mentor has always been accountable to the NMC for their judgement regarding a student's achievement, and this commitment continues.

The importance of Chapter 5 is that it ascertains the effectiveness of facilitation of learning and the process of assessment. As these are two major components of mentorship, it is educationally viable to gain feedback to ensure what is being delivered is meeting the healthcare students' needs. Throughout this chapter, issues such as students' evaluation of placement, clinical audits and discussions between students and mentors will be explored. The overarching theme is directed towards ensuring the practice placement is an appropriate environment conducive to student learning.

As a continuity strategy, what makes an 'effective' placement for healthcare students will be the exploratory theme throughout Chapter 6. The practice placement is a vital setting for ensuring that the healthcare student can relate theory to practice. It is therefore essential that mentors review the effectiveness of their placements and evaluate the provision of academic learning resources that are available for students to access. This will depend on the speciality and type of student accessing the healthcare setting but a positive commitment is advantageous if the process of mentorship is going to be student-centred. The theme context of practice attempts to identify specific individuality characteristics that make the student the person that they are.

Chapter 7 relates to the previous one and emphasises the importance of ensuring that care delivery is appropriate to meeting contemporary healthcare. The outcomes focus on the importance of interprofessional partnership and ensuring the environment reflects that contemporary ideology to enhancing learning. Therefore, the focus throughout will examine issues such as welcoming students into the practice placement, the importance of the tripartite interviews, helping them to achieve the 'essential skills clusters' assessments and to identify the importance of disability equality training for mentors. Some of these contemporary changes are in response to increasing awareness of evidence-based practice.

For all nurses, midwives and health professions there is a need to ensure that their own personal and professional knowledge, skills and attitudes represent a pro-active contemporary stance. Throughout Chapter 8, the focus is directed towards lifelong learning and ensuring that the importance

of research-based practice is acknowledged and implemented wherever appropriate. Therefore, an overview of research methodologies, and differentiation between quantitative and qualitative research approaches will emphasise nurses' awareness of evidence-based practice within contemporary healthcare and particularly mentorship.

The aim throughout Chapter 9 is to review the process of mentorship and those involved in providing a support network. This includes a review of leadership skills, how these link to the new approach to mentorship and the impact of managing change in the contemporary NHS. The updated ten-day mentor training programme and the need for annual mentor updates will be explored in order to meet the NMC (2008a) recommendations. An overview of the triennial reviews and the future introduction of the sign-off mentor will also be explored and the additional responsibilities highlighted.

The final chapter is unique because it offers a summary of the reality of mentorship and how mentors have actually dealt with the differences between idealism and reality in respect of their role. The importance of phenomenology for generating new research-based data will be explored. Throughout, it is hoped that new mentors undertaking a mentor preparation training programme will be able to focus on their own development of 'becoming a mentor' and how the eight domains, and 26 outcomes have been used as a supportive guiding framework.

How to use this book

This book is a valuable guide for those nurses who, following registration, will be working towards gaining an insight into mentorship at Stage One: Nurses and Midwives level and then continuing to undertake mentor preparation training in order to become a Stage Two: Mentor. In each chapter, the NMC (2008a) aims and outcomes for both stages will be identified and form the basis for the remainder of the chapter. The overall content will help mentors to relate the identified underpinning theoretical perspectives to the process of mentorship so that they can apply the content to their own practice placement.

Also, the book will be helpful for all existing mentors in order to encourage them to be introspective, explore their own mentorship experiences and be utilised as an educational tool to enhance their annual mentor update. Throughout 2008, the NMC introduced or revised a number of changes to mentorship and other aspects of the nursing profession, and a number of these will be explored throughout the book. Each chapter

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contains a number of thought-provoking features: Mentor Activities, case studies and frequently asked questions that are intended to generate discussion between all mentors. By engaging in these discussions, this will result in a sharing of ideas and experiences so that those at the Stage One: Nurses and Midwives level can value the Stage Two: Mentor's lived experience of mentorship.

The Mentor Activities are designed both for self-reflection or to be discussed with colleagues, depending on the construction of your work team. The case studies are genuine and are a combination of both positive and negative mentorship experiences which will assist mentors to gain an awareness of the challenges and sense of achievement that mentorship entails. Each case study will end with a thought-provoking question to reflect on individually or discuss with your colleagues. This book will have its most vital role as a complementary or essential text to support the five educational input days associated with mentor preparation training, depending on the stance taking. Each chapter will focus on one of the eight domains specified by the NMC (2008a) so that if the student cannot attend a school-based day for whatever reason, the corresponding chapter can be used as a self-directed mechanism that will meet the learning outcomes for that day. The presentational syntax throughout the book is in the format of an ongoing discussion similar to that undertaken in the classroom. This was the format suggested by those undertaking mentor training and as part of mentor update discussions when the proposal for writing this book was suggested. This approach of relating theory to practice was identified as being user friendly for 'busy' mentors.

Therefore, this book will be a valuable educational resource and pertinent to a wide audience of healthcare professionals because:

- 1 It adopts an interprofessional approach, focusing on advisory guidelines from the Nursing and Midwifery Council, as well as the Health Professions Council.
- 2 It encourages an exploration of both the mentor's role as well as that of the healthcare student. This approach will encourage an awareness and appreciation of each other's subsequent role while contributing to the delivery of care to patients at the various stages of their healthcare journey.
- 3 This is a valuable text for all those undertaking mentor training or wishing to update their own knowledge of contemporary mentorship in accordance with the requirements stated by the NMC (2008a).
- 4 It will hopefully be used as a useful discussion educational resource for existing mentors, particularly if you engage in all the Mentor Activities, case studies and frequently asked questions.