Clinician's Commentary on Yoon et al.¹

Yoon and colleagues¹ article, "Exploring Mentorship from the Perspective of Physiotherapy Mentors in Canada," is an important contribution to the field of mentorship and to the profession of physiotherapy. The findings of their comprehensive survey add to those of a number of studies published over the years in Canada on the complexity and rewards of mentorship relationships.²⁻⁵

INTERPROFESSIONAL MENTORING

An interesting finding of this work was that the physiotherapist participants acknowledged that they provided mentoring to their interprofessional colleagues. Other researchers have noted this from the mentees' perspective, including that of newly graduated Canadian occupational therapists transitioning from university to their 1st year of practice. Darene Toal-Sullivan⁶ found that the support of colleagues and peers was critical to new graduates' learning and eased the adjustment from student to occupational therapist. Toal-Sullivan noted in her qualitative study that "mentoring was evident in collaborative approaches to learning among colleagues and clients who provided guidance and support to the participants" and that "the participants most frequently learned in collaboration with physiotherapists, during collaborative activities such as carrying out components of clients' evaluation and treatment together and problem-solving practice situations."^{6(p519)}

ROLE MODELS

Yoon and colleagues¹ noted that their questionnaire design had some limitations, for example, in the case of question 18, which asked participants to rate how often they consciously engaged in acting as a role model. Participants indicated that this activity, along with providing moral support and assisting with skill development, was the one in which they most often engaged with mentees. As Yoon and colleagues mentioned, acting as a role model is difficult to self-assess; it is one that others, such as mentees, would be better able to judge.

Role modelling is an interesting activity to quantify, especially in clinical physiotherapy situations. For example, physiotherapists rarely work together, even in large teaching hospitals in which many physiotherapists work in a similar clinical environment. Most patient-physiotherapist interaction is one on one, often in a patient's room. Team interactions, such as rounds, may also involve only one physiotherapist. Physiotherapists may never see another physiotherapist engage in both clinical skills and conflict resolution or other important professional activities, providing some role modelling behaviour.

STUDENTS

It is interesting to note that many of these mentoring situations occur during physiotherapist-student interaction, but even then clinical supervisors sometimes try to shield students from certain situations, such as conflicts. As a result, students do not have what would be a very helpful opportunity to see a physiotherapist role-model professional behaviour.

As Yoon and colleagues¹ noted, the terminology used around mentoring can be confusing, for example, the difference between "mentoring" and "preceptorship." As they noted, in their inter-

actions with students many physiotherapists provide both informal mentoring and the more formalized supervision or preceptorship. In either case, however, working with students provides physiotherapists with many opportunities to influence their future colleagues. Martine Quesnel, one of the study's authors, reported in her work on peer mentorship that the majority of physiotherapy students (68.7%) who responded to the survey did not have any experience with peer mentorship.² It may be that those who are mentoring students need to identify and acknowledge to students that they are providing mentorship to them, not assume that they will somehow recognize that they are being mentored.

CANADIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

As Yoon and colleagues^{1(p.44)} suggested, "More organized mentorship initiatives by PT professional associations will be invaluable for practising clinicians, their respective institutions, and the PT profession as a whole."

Close to 10 years ago, the Canadian Physiotherapy Association (CPA) established a mentorship programme through a grant from the Ontario government. Under the leadership of the Ontario Physiotherapy Association's executive director, Dorianne Sauve and Christine James, who was working at CPA at the time, this online programme had positive results for both the mentors and the mentees. However, this programme was set up with the technology of the time. Technology has changed, and so has the tech savviness of health care professionals, including physiotherapists, with the advent of digital interventions into health care professional education, such as mobile health apps and e-learning. A recent *Physiotherapy Canada* article highlighted the use of Facebook by physiotherapists,⁷ and Yoon and colleagues¹ participants reported using both email and social media to interact with their mentees. I believe these findings support the idea that CPA take another look at providing a national mentorship programme through technology.

Yoon and colleagues¹ findings should indicate to physiotherapists who are providing mentorship to their colleagues in these challenging times that they are not alone.

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