Guide to Being an Effective Preceptor

Nutrition and Dietetic Educators and Preceptors
Professional Development Committee

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Webinar Objectives

- Differentiate effective versus ineffective preceptors.
- Identify characteristics of effective preceptors.
- Demonstrate how to be an effective preceptor and mentor.
Differentiate Effective versus Ineffective Preceptors

Effective vs. Ineffective Preceptors

EFFECTIVE PRECEPTORS
- Provide appropriate feedback for students’ improvement.
- Make dietetic practice a fulfilling experience.

INEFFECTIVE PRECEPTORS
- Lack skills in providing feedback; judgmental
- Demonstrate a negative attitude toward students and their career

Sarcona, Burrowes, and Pernari (2015), Journal of Allied Health
Identify Characteristics of Effective Preceptors

- Has sufficient professional knowledge
- Is a skillful dietitian/practitioner
- Patient; treats students sincerely and objectively, and with respect
- Encourages student to think and learn independently

Sarcona, Burrowes, and Fernari (2015), Journal of Allied Health
Characteristics of an Effective Preceptor
Poll of dietetic interns (n = 16)

- Knowledgeable, dedicated, motivated, confident, passionate
- Good communication/constructive feedback
- Supportive, encouraging, understanding, compassionate
- Organized, approachable, foster independence

Source: Purdue University

How to be an Effective Preceptor and Mentor
Role of an Effective Preceptor

- Build a relationship with the intern.
  - Provide a complete orientation.
  - Supervise the intern throughout the rotation.
- Recognize uniqueness of each intern.
- Identify any barriers the intern may have to learning.
- Provide effective teaching strategies.

Orientation: Build a relationship with the intern

Before rotation starts
- Give intern directions to facility and offices, and where to park
- Explain what to wear (i.e., lab coat), about lunch, and what resources/supplies to bring

Introductions
- Introduce intern to significant people and use his/her name
- Provide a tour of the facility and explain where the intern will have workspace

Policies & Procedures (P & P)
- Review P & P with intern; set clear rules & expectations
- Provide time for intern to ask questions/share information; help him/her feel comfortable
**Getting started / progressing in the rotation**

- **Demonstration**
  - Intern observes preceptor
  - Discuss rationale for processes with intern

- **Practice with supervision**
  - Intern receives feedback on performance
  - Intern makes appropriate corrections with encouragement from preceptor

- **Independent Practice**
  - Provide opportunities for independent work within timeframes/set time for questions
  - Continue to take intern to the next level; review intern’s progress w/ continuous feedback

**Recognize uniqueness of each intern**

- Assorted didactic knowledge
- Enthusiastic or reserved
- Learning style
- Level of maturity
- Life experiences
- Communication skills
- Time management
- Distinctive cultural/ethnic characteristics
Barriers to learning

- Help interns identify learning barriers.
- Provide interns with strategies to overcome barriers.
- For severe problems/barriers seek professional assistance.

Address unprofessional behavior or inadequate performance*

- Discuss with the intern and be specific.
- Communicate consequences of actions or deficiencies (e.g., if they are late every day, they must make up a full day).
- Reevaluate that expectations are realistic.
- For knowledge deficiencies, give intern extra reading outside the rotation.

*All significant problems should be discussed with the Dietetics Program Director.
Provide Effective Teaching Strategies

Effective teaching strategies

- Use the “one minute preceptor” approach.
- Use effective feedback.
- Treat students as adult learners.
- Encourage self-reflection.
The “one minute preceptor”

1. Get commitment from the student about what he/she thinks is going on.
2. Probe for reasoning and/or supporting evidence.
3. Teach important principles.
4. Provide positive, constructive feedback.
5. Correct mistakes in reasoning.

One minute preceptor examples

• “What do you think is going on with this patient? How would you prioritize this case?”

• “What leads you to believe that this formula is the best choice for this patient’s tube feeding?”

• “It takes experience to learn how to prioritize clinical problems. This is what I usually do.”
### Use effective feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>Encouragement</th>
<th>Direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps intern change behavior or reinforces behavior</td>
<td>Show your interest and concern</td>
<td>Provides intention of teaching – intern achieves competencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides information about how he/she affects others</td>
<td>Can create an intern’s willingness slightly in excess of ability (brings them to the next level)</td>
<td>Preceptor explains best way to accomplish tasks</td>
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### Criteria for feedback

- **Provide specific feedback, not general.**
  - “When you are in the kitchen, you need to wear a hairnet”
  - NOT: “You are not prepared to work in the kitchen.”

- **Describe intern’s behavior rather than judge them.**
  - “I noticed you texting while you were writing your note. Remember to keep your phone away during clinical time and focus on your tasks.”
  - NOT: “Don’t use your cell phone while at work.”

- **Acknowledge needs of both yourself & the intern.**
  - “I am really busy right now, but will be happy to meet with you in 30 minutes and we can have a discussion.”
  - NOT: “Don’t bother me now.”
Criteria for feedback, continued

- Balance positive feedback with constructive criticism that includes direction for change.
  - “Your assessment included all of the appropriate information, but I think your nutrition diagnosis could be more specific to the patient's food intake. Why don’t you review some of the other diagnoses and then choose one that will tie in more closely with your intervention strategies.”

Praise is a form of feedback that can enhance motivation; but has to be given correctly

Use effort/process praise versus ability praise

For example: “I appreciated that you came well-prepared today.”

Versus

“You are really smart or you are the best intern I have ever had!”
Treat interns as adult learners

- Confer with interns about their prior experience.
- Have interns observe and come up with their own strategies.
- Discuss feasibility of their ideas/plans.
- Guide interns as they practice; ask for their opinion.
Encourage self-reflection

- Self-reflection ⇔ self-evaluation ⇔ self-assessment ⇔ self-analysis
- Allows assimilation or re-working of concepts, skills, knowledge and/or values into pre-existing knowledge.
- Can lead to moral, personal, and emotional growth during clinical training.

Techniques for intern self-reflection

PART OF THE FEEDBACK PROCESS

- Before giving feedback/evaluation, begin with an intern's self-evaluation.
  - “Before I share my evaluation, how did you view your performance?”
- Have the intern write a self-analysis on a performance evaluation.
- Encourage the intern to list/discuss what was done well, along with what could be improved.
Techniques for intern self-reflection

**JOURNALING**

Interns keep a daily journal/log that helps them reflect on their experiences.

Be a part of professional groups:
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and its practice groups, local dietetic groups, and other professional groups.
- Learn from the interns!

Stay current with professional development portfolio.
A clinical experience is not really about the facility, but more about the preceptors who create an environment for a successful rotation.
Q & A
Type your questions into the chat section and we will answer in the order it is received.

Thank you for being a preceptor!