

2013 AAMC Group on Women in Medicine and Science (GWIMS) Poster Session
Poster Session Theme: “Women in Medicine and Science: Collaboration in a Time of Change”
Location: Philadelphia, PA

Title of Abstract: The role of mentorship in academic productivity and thoughts of quitting for women assistant professors

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Purpose: Women in academic medicine are not achieving levels of career success on par with comparable men colleagues¹⁻³. Mentoring is frequently cited as a key intervention to remedy this gap³. The purpose of this research project was to assess whether measures of mentoring were associated with commonly accepted criteria for faculty success in academic medicine. In this sample of women assistant professors, we hypothesized that measures of informal and formal mentoring, as well as satisfaction with mentoring, would be correlated with increased numbers of publications and grants and reduced likelihood of intending to quit.

Method: As part of a larger NIH-funded study, 133 women assistant professors from a prestigious school of medicine completed a web-based survey and data was abstracted from their curriculum vitae, including total number of publications and grants. As part of the survey, participants reported the number of their current formal/assigned mentors and informal mentors. Using a 5-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, participants indicated their agreement with the following, “I am satisfied with my mentoring, in general” and “My department places a high priority on getting junior faculty the mentoring they need.” A two-item job turnover scale was created using the average response to the two items “I frequently think of quitting my job” and “I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months” (both rated on a 5-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree).

Results: A negative binomial regression was conducted on the total number of publications (square-root transformed). Mentor satisfaction was associated with number of publications ($p = .08$). The mentoring variables, as a set, explained 12.1% of the variance in number of grants obtained (adjusted for years at Penn). Specifically, a greater number of informal mentors was associated with more grants obtained ($p = 0.03$). Individuals who felt that their department placed a high priority on getting junior faculty the mentoring that they need also reported a greater number of grants ($p = .01$). In a linear regression, the set of mentoring variables explained 11% of the variance in the intention to turnover scale. Satisfaction with mentoring was significantly associated with turnover intentions, with greater satisfaction associated with lower intentions to quit ($p = 0.03$).

Conclusions: Although creating formal mentoring relationships is viewed as an essential means of addressing the career gap between men and women in academic medicine, our data suggest that mentoring *quality*, not only the number of mentors, is an important criteria for academic productivity and reduced intentions to leave. Specifically, satisfaction with mentoring was associated with both a greater number of publications and reduced likelihood of wanting to quit. The other important mentoring measure was the number of informal mentors, which was associated with a greater number of grants. These findings point to the importance of creating a supportive context for mentoring and providing both mentors and mentees with the knowledge and skills to develop a high-quality and rewarding relationship.

References

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