



# Improving a mentoring program to enhance relationships between incoming and senior medical students

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## BACKGROUND

- **First-year medical students (MS1s) face numerous challenges when beginning medical school**, including rigorous academic work, financial burden, and other personal life stressors.<sup>1</sup>
- Mentoring medical students has been shown to have numerous benefits.<sup>2-5</sup> (Figure 1)

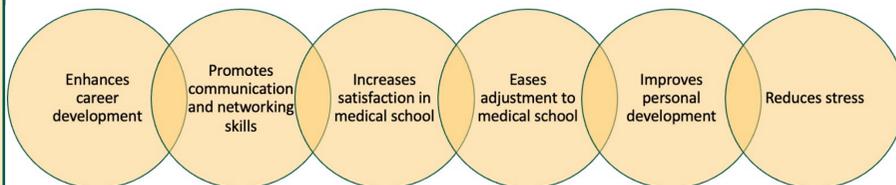


Figure 1. Benefits of medical school mentoring<sup>2-5</sup>

- The Aesculapians Honor Society, a student service organization at Wayne State University School of Medicine, **organizes a yearly near-peer mentoring match** between upperclassmen and first-year medical students.
- **In prior years, this program faced many challenges:**
  - Mentors were matched based only on specialty of interest
  - Students struggled to connect with their mentors
  - The program often did not create lasting partnerships.
- This year, **personal questions were added to our matching survey** to allow pairing of MS1s and upperclassmen with similar life experiences in order to strengthen relationships formed through this program.
  - These characteristics included identifying as LGBTQ+, identifying as underrepresented in medicine, and experiencing mental illness.

## AIM

**AIM: To assess the success of a mentor/mentee program that matches mentees by similar life experiences.**

## METHODS

- A presurvey (9/2020) and post-survey (7/2021) were administered to MS1s that participated in the program via Qualtrics.
- Students were asked questions such as how connected to medical students outside of their class they felt and whether they knew an upperclassman that they felt comfortable seeking advice from (Figure 2).
- In the post-survey, MS1s were asked if they felt the program had impacted their success and well-being in medical school. There was also space to leave additional feedback.
- Data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics applied to the dataset

## SURVEY

Figure 2. Survey to assess the status of student relationships

1. How connected to other WSU medical students outside of your M1 class do you feel at this time?
2. How adjusted to medical school are you feeling at this time?
3. If you wanted advice on something academic, do you have an upperclassman (M2-M4) you would feel comfortable reaching out to?
4. If you wanted advice on something personal, do you have an upperclassman (M2-M4) you would feel comfortable reaching out to?
5. If the topic you wanted advice on was something that would require showing one of your vulnerabilities, do you have an upperclassman (M2-M4) you would feel comfortable reaching out to?
6. I know someone in years M2-M4 who has faced similar challenges to me during medical school.

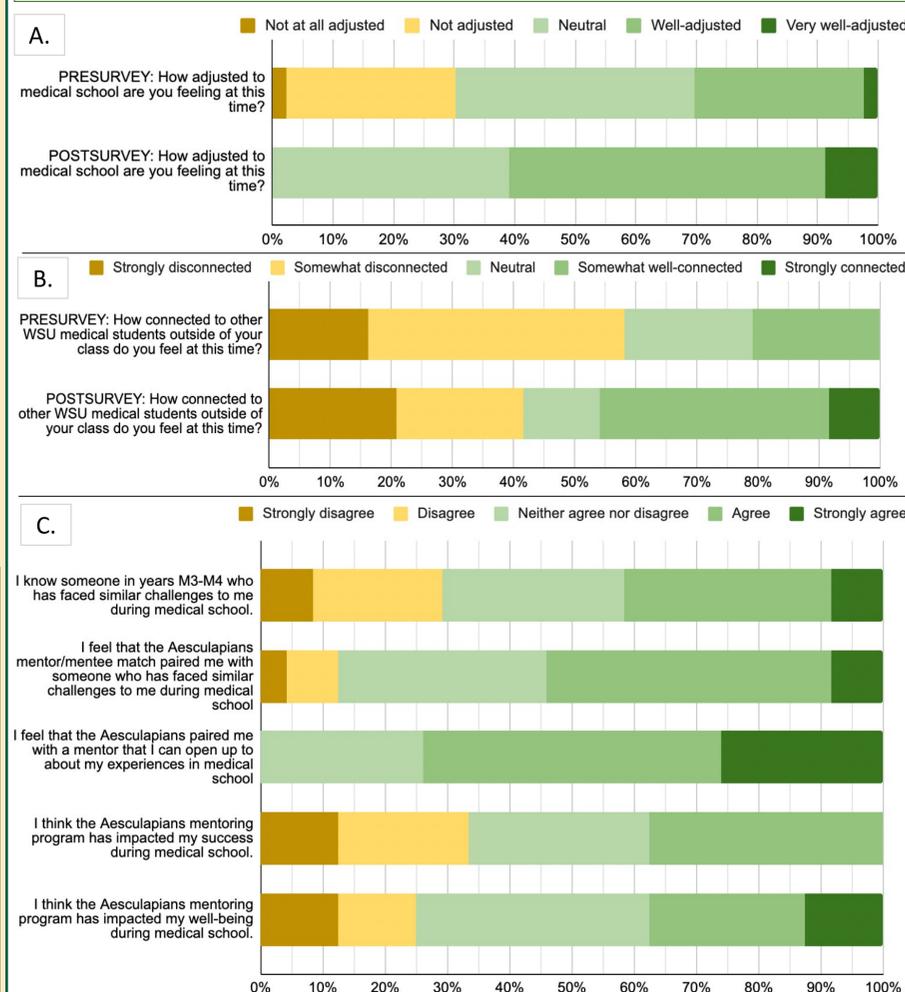
To view the complete survey tool, utilize this QR code!



SCAN ME

## RESULTS

Figure 3. Survey results



## RESULTS

- Of the 73 MS1s who participated in the program, 43 (59%) participants completed the pre-survey and 24 (33%) completed the post-survey.
- **Figure 3A:** In the postsurvey, more participants stated they felt 'well-adjusted' or 'very well-adjusted' compared to the presurvey.
- **Figure 3B:** In the postsurvey, more participants stated they felt 'somewhat well connected' or 'strongly connected' compared to the presurvey. However, a larger percent of postsurvey participants felt 'strongly disconnected' compared to presurvey participants.
- **Figure 3C:** Postsurvey results.
  - A majority of survey participants agreed that the program paired them with someone who has faced similar challenges and a mentor they can open up to about experiences in medical school.
  - While many survey participants agreed that the program impacted their success in medical school or impacted their well-being, a considerable proportion of participants disagreed.
- Feedback ranged from COVID-19 difficulties to feeling supported by their mentor. One participant noted: "It was difficult with all of our M1 responsibilities being remote...Additionally, I'm too zoomed out to really want to "meet" over zoom and I feel that my mentor had similar sentiments..." Another participant mentioned: "I really enjoyed speaking with my mentor and thought they had valuable experience. I'm glad that I signed up for the program!"

## DISCUSSION

- Our mentoring program matching life experiences resulted in improvement in adjustment and connections.
- Some strong relationships between mentors and mentees with similar life experiences.
- Barriers identified included mentor and mentee "zoom fatigue".
- Without a comparison group we cannot definitively attribute student success to program participation.

## CONCLUSION

- Working within COVID constraints, a virtual mentor/mentee program matching life experiences positively impacted perceived success and well-being of participating M1 students.
- Virtual mentoring was successful for some but not all students. In the future we hope a hybrid program may be possible.
- To enhance the program, we plan to add additional personal questions to better match mentees to mentors with similar experiences

## REFERENCES

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