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## Editorial

# Lifelong teachers for lifelong learners

Gaurav Agnihotri<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dept. of Anatomy, Government Medical College, Amritsar, Punjab, India



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When I grew up, I realized the role my parents had in shaping my persona.

When I became a medical teacher I realized my teaching was a reflection of my teachers.

CBME stresses upon making the Indian medical graduate a lifelong learner.<sup>1</sup> At the same time it is imperative that medical teachers should realize that their role is not limited to a few years with a student. They should ideally be lifelong teachers. A teacher, especially one in a professional college should be a friend, philosopher and guide. This 'lifelong motivator or mentor' can do wonders for the student. At the same time it ensures fulfillment and wholesomeness for both the medical teacher and the student.

Every teacher including myself has learnt by interacting and observing our teachers. We learn from the mannerisms and actions of our teachers. We often imbibe their characteristics and qualities without 'conscious realization'. What we appreciate, we accept and what we don't, we try to avoid. We also often mock mannerisms we don't like. We all are a products of a process. We learn from our mistakes and grow, when we are able to avoid them in future.

The present curriculum demands that medical teachers should 'mentor' the students. In most institutions, students are allocated to the mentor and vice versa. This ensures that every 'mentor' has mentees and the mentees have a mentor through a process built in the curriculum. Though 'mentor-mentee' opportunity should be available to every teacher

and student, the fact is not everyone relishes or avails this opportunity. Rather than being caved in, by considering it as a mandatory requirement, the mentor-mentee should invest in creating a 'lifelong bond' which is beneficial to both parties. Also, I personally feel that a mentor-mentee should be able to 'seek and invest' in each other rather than be bound by an office protocol. Of course this should not be done immediately, but after numerous student teacher interactions and observations. This type of student-teacher association has potential to be more fruitful and lifelong.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. The Mechanics of Lifelong Teaching-What Makes it 'Tick'

Every medical teacher should understand the importance of the opportunity of lifelong teaching because it allows making a constructive change in the life of the student. Ideally, the medical teacher should be available for a constructive session for all students and not a select few. The medical teacher should interact professionally with the students and not be 'too friendly' with them. This requires 'maturity' but when a teacher owns knowledge, confidence and decorum the students want to be 'mentored'. The initial student teacher interactions help the teacher identify students who need mentorship or can be mentored. Thus, a habitat can be created wherein the student/students can choose their lifelong teacher and the teacher can opt for their lifelong students.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [anatomygaurav@gmail.com](mailto:anatomygaurav@gmail.com) (G. Agnihotri).

After a few mentor-mentee interactions, the teamwork will bloom in some situations. In these situations the mentor-mentee develop a mutual respect for each other. It is these opportunities which the lifelong teacher should recognize and then invest in. Over a period of time, a team of energetic, willing and creative individuals is created who can network with each other and the teacher in a constructive manner. The student benefits when groomed during the professional journey. The teacher also learns about the contemporary student attitude and requirements by interactions. The experience of the lifelong mentor catapults the student and the teacher gets a team member willing to work for success and enrichment.

### 1.1. Benefits of a lifelong teacher-student relation

#### 1.1.1. Loneliness is never an issue

We learn so much from our seniors. If that senior is a teacher then this opens up a window of ideas and opportunities. The teacher can judge the mid-set of the prodigy and ensure a support mechanism in troubled times. Students often take trivial things seriously and the teacher can ensure that they realize their true potential without wavering. The teacher while interacting with the students gets an idea of their mind-set and ends up learning a lot from the smart 'Gen Z' mentees.

#### 1.1.2. 'Growth' stimulates

Results do matter. When a relation creates a positive milieu, it stimulates respect and mutual admiration. Coming out of a negative decision and overcoming it with integrated ideas and efforts fosters bonhomie.

#### 1.1.3. Networking helps

The lifelong teacher can identify talents and utilize the talent of one student to benefit another and vice versa.

#### 1.1.4. The 'test of time' adds flavor to 'togetherness'

Helping, caring and working as a team for some objectives creates respect and admiration for each other. The team members start enjoying and relishing each other's success and take pride in achievements of every member of the group.

Do's for a lifelong teacher

1. Give freedom of choice to the student Accept only those who accept you.
2. Ensure fairness and earn respect over a period of time. Create a decorum which defines you.<sup>3</sup>
3. 'Invest' in the student.
4. Be willing to sacrifice.
5. Be patient-It's not a rat race.

Do's for a lifelong mentee

1. Be sincere, create trust and earn the respect of your mentor.
2. Be available for networking You cannot switch on and off at your convenience.
3. Ensure that you give due credit to the mentor. Be it success or failure, appreciate that the mentor has invested in you.
4. Remember, a teacher is forever. When you become a teacher, your teacher then becomes a teacher of teacher's.



## 2. Conclusions

A medical teacher should be grateful to Almighty for providing a platform which provides an opportunity to inspire, motivate and create 'gems' which can build our society. Let us be forever grateful to our teachers. The impact of a true mentor is not transitory but 'lifelong'. A teacher's success is not determined by power or position but by displaying humility, humanity and earning the respect created by actions. The sense of pride achieved by helping others provides the deepest satisfaction and peace. Let us take pride in the growth of our students. This much 'Guru' owes to the 'Gurukul' and the 'Shishyas'.


## 3. Conflict of Interest

None.

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### **Author biography**

**Gaurav Agnihotri**, Associate Professor  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7841-6810>

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