

Experience of participating in a mastermind group

Pernilla Garmy^{1,2}, Ulrika Olsson Möller², Cecilia Winberg^{1,3}, Lina Magnusson^{1,4} and Nelli Kalnak^{5,6}.

¹ Department of Health Sciences, Medical Faculty, Lund University, Sweden ² Faculty of Health Sciences, Kristianstad University, Sweden

³ Ystad hospital, Region Skåne, Sweden ⁴ Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, Section of Social Medicine, Sahlgrenska Academy, Gothenburg University, Sweden. ⁵ MedCUL, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Medical Faculty, Lund University, Sweden ⁶ Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Unit, Department of Clinical Sciences, Medical Faculty, Lund University, Sweden

Aim

The aim was to describe postdoctoral researchers' (n=5) experiences in a mastermind group.

Conclusions

Taking part in a mastermind group can be extremely effective in shifting focus from the negatives of a challenge faced by group members to the positives of a potential solution.



Topics in the mastermind meetings

- The scientific writing process and publication strategies
- Balance between work and leisure time
- Authorship on publications
- How to write a CV
- Leadership skills
- Short and long perspectives of career goals
- Job applications, interviews and tests
- Navigating and networking in the research community

Results

Three themes as a result of joining this group emerged:

1. A place that offers conversation in confidence
2. Opportunity for personal and professional development
3. A "breathing hole"

Background

The importance of mentoring for success is well documented. The academic career path is seldom straightforward. Many postgraduate and PhD students and postdoctoral fellows have uncertain employment opportunities, and the sick-leave rates are high in these groups. Joining a collegial support group, a so-called mastermind group, could be one way of coping with the challenges.

Context

The mastermind group was established at the Medical Faculty, Lund University, Sweden. It was initiated by the faculty career center during a training course for postdoctoral researchers. The mastermind group was formed by five early career researchers within the medical sciences, representing different areas of clinical expertise (physiotherapy, nursing, global health, and speech-language pathology). The group hold 2-3 meetings per semester, each meeting lasting 2 h. The meeting's structure includes about 20 to 30 min focus on each member's choice of a topic and/or update report. The team members provide feedback in addition to a follow-up of previous topics, aiming at supporting each member's career. Another important point is the sharing of information about career building possibilities.

"For me, it has been valuable with a small forum with the opportunity to speak freely, ie in confidence, about what is relevant, both disappointments and success."

"I really like this breathing hole where you can get power."

"I have been able to think a bit higher, dare to dream a bit bigger, and have space to share both difficult and fun experiences safely."

"To me, the meetings have been a "safe spot" where I have been given the opportunity to express thoughts that I otherwise did not have a clear forum for."