IMPROVING OUR EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Many of us can remember at least one negative learning experience from our medical school days. Far from “toughening us up”, we now know that the use of humiliation and intimidation can actually cause a decrease in knowledge, retention and engagement. The annual AAMC Graduation Questionnaire given to graduating medical students includes a series of questions about student mistreatment. Over 80% of the nation’s medical students don’t report incidents for reasons that include that they didn’t think anything would be done about it and fear of reprisal.

Since 2011, we have had a policy and procedure in place at Stanford SoM to address this, including the creation of 1) the Respectful Educator and Mistreatment Committee, 2) a consistent method of response and 3) end of clerkship data collection. Additionally, our Office of Medical Student Wellness created a team of well-respected, senior faculty members trained to counsel an educator who has been identified by students. These coaches help educators improve communication style and seek guidance for personal and environmental issues resulting in disrespectful behavior.

The Department of Surgery under the direction of Dr. James Lau, surgery clerkship director, has taken a prominent role in thinking outside the box, with positive results. In addition to a pre-clerkship meeting to set expectations and a post-clerkship de-briefing, he and his education fellow meet weekly with the surgery clerkship medical students. They also explore aspects of the culture of medicine and brainstorm strategies to optimize the learning environment after seeing a series of videos showing confusing/intimidating situations in the OR and wards.

It behooves all medical educators to respect each learner, to invest in the development of their own teaching skills, and to create a learner-centered learning climate. Positive mentorship can be very powerful in fostering impressive future teachers and physicians. How do you want to be remembered by your students?

Research:


Resident perspective on factors leading to mistreatment, with suggested solutions to foster “safe learning environments, collaborative teams, empathic teachers, and resilient learners.”