



A NOVEL MEANS OF ACQUIRING HIGH QUALITY FEEDBACK FOR TRAINING PROGRAMS – THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR OMBUDSPERSON

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BACKGROUND

- Providing frank feedback or constructive criticism to Program Directors (PD) may be hindered by trainee fears of negative repercussions
- Smaller training programs, e.g. fellowships, face challenges obtaining high quality feedback due to anonymity concerns
- **Ombudsperson:** an independent appointee whose task is to investigate and attempt to resolve complaints and problems

METHODS

- PDs from Infectious Disease (ID) and Endocrinology fellowships **partnered** to meet with fellows from the **opposite** program
- Semi-annual meetings held December and June of the academic year
- Meetings started with 2 questions on a 1-10 scale:
 - How do you rate the fellowship program?
 - How do you rate the job the PD and program leadership are doing?
- Fellow evaluation process, faculty feedback, education vs. service balance, and gaps in training were discussed.
- Fellows identified additional concerns
- Anonymously summarized meeting notes were returned to the PD of the other program
- Fellows were then asked to complete a brief questionnaire about their experience.

RESULTS

- 15 fellows completed the survey (6 Endocrinology, 9 ID; Table)
- 100% agreed the goal of the ombudsperson review meeting (i.e. to address fellow concerns in a more confidential setting) was achieved
- 100% were comfortable sharing concerns and feedback to the ombudsperson
- 53% were more comfortable sharing concerns to the ombudsperson than directly to the PD
- 87% agreed concerns raised during the first ombudsperson meeting were addressed by the Program in subsequent months
- 100% found it helpful that the ombudsperson was another PD
- 100% recommended that ombudsperson review meetings should continue in the fellowship

TABLE

Table: Characteristics of participants and outcomes of questions about fellowship ombudsperson program

	Total Participants N = 15 (%)
Program	
Endocrinology	6 (40)
Infectious Disease	9 (60)
Fellowship Year	
1	6 (40)
2	9 (60)
Do you feel the ombudsperson was effective in achieving its goal?	
Yes	15 (100)
Were you comfortable sharing concerns and feedback regarding your fellowship to the ombudsperson?	
Yes	15 (100)
Were you more comfortable sharing concerns and feedback regarding your fellowship to the ombudsperson than directly to your PD?	
More comfortable with Ombudsperson	8 (53)
Equally comfortable with both Ombudsperson and PD	7 (47)
More comfortable with PD	0
Did you find that concerns raised during the ombudsperson meeting were addressed by your PD in the subsequent months?	
Strongly agree	2 (13)
Agree	11 (73)
Neutral	2 (13)
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0
Would you recommend that the ombudsperson review meetings continue in this fellowship?	
Yes	15 (100)
Was it helpful that the ombudsperson was a PD for another fellowship (i.e. was aware of fellowship structures)?	
Yes	15 (100)

SAMPLE FEEDBACK

From ID fellows:

- Antibiotic stewardship “automatic” consults for restricted antibiotics were considered service > education
- Some faculty gave great feedback while many others gave none

From Endocrinology fellows:

- Gaps identified in exposure to type 1 diabetes and thyroid cancer patients
- Certain clinics were noted to include too many NPs/PAs which took away faculty teaching time from fellows
- Recent efforts to improve the quality and frequency of faculty feedback were noted

DISCUSSION

- Fellowship PD ombudsperson meeting is a novel means for soliciting constructive feedback from trainees at small training programs
- Small training programs can address fellow concerns of providing feedback while maintaining anonymity by implementing an ombudsperson process with a partner PD

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