
WHY NOT?

Why not assess another trainer and his/her trainee?

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AT a meeting of the Camden and Islington Trainers' Workshop in North London, a trainer presented an audio-recording of a session in which he had tried to review his trainee's progress half-way through the 12-month attachment. After a useful discussion one member suggested that it would be interesting to see if more could be achieved by another trainer carrying out a review of a colleague's trainee rather than his own. Everybody agreed that this should be tried out, and naturally the doctor who had made the suggestion was awarded the task. Shortly afterwards, therefore, I met a colleague's trainee who had completed seven months of his trainee year and we made a recording of the session.

Beforehand I wrote down my aims:

1 a) To try and find out what the trainer had wanted to achieve in his training programme by this time.

b) To see how far he had succeeded and to discover any areas which should have been covered by now and had not been dealt with.

2. To see if there were any emotional problems in the trainee.

3. To see if there were any problems in the trainer/trainee relationship.

It is already obvious that, whereas the original trainer had tried to assess his trainee, I was beginning to concentrate on the trainer.

I then wrote down a list of items I wished to cover in our talk. It was still headed "Assessment of trainee after six months".

1. Previous jobs.

2. Had trainer and trainee planned the year jointly?

3. When the year began, what did the trainee believe were his areas of weakness? What did he want from the trainee year?

4. Does he learn from other members of the practice—

partners, health visitors, district nurses, receptionists, social workers?

5. Has he developed his own list of patients? Do any particular problems worry him? Is there any involvement or overinvolvement with patients? What sort of problem does he discuss with his trainer?

6. Does he have regular time set aside for tutorials?

7. What attachments has he had and what are planned?

8. Has he visited other practices?

9. What has he read and what does he intend to read?

10. Finally, a problem: how would the trainee speak to the practice secretary/administrator if he found a drawer containing 30 old claim forms which had not been submitted?

The session lasted 30 minutes and the recording was later presented at a teachers' workshop. The content of the tape was discussed and methods of improvement were suggested. All present at the meeting agreed that this method of assessment seemed to be extremely valuable and we propose to continue to experiment with it.

If you are a trainer, why not try out this method of assessment? The intention should not be to judge a trainee but to assess how much he has learned and then to tell the trainer how far he has or has not succeeded in his training programme. Whether a recording should be made is also a personal decision. To do so may inhibit some trainees, but it certainly produces a more objective account than a report from the trainer and it does not allow you to forget important items. It shows up your errors and should help you to improve your technique.

Why not let your colleague carry out an assessment of your trainee and your teaching programme? Why not do this at the beginning and the end as well as the middle of the year? Why not do it less formally or even more formally? The possibilities are many and we look forward to carrying out more of these experiments.

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