



**Guidance and Advice
for Mentors and Mentees**

Contents

Summary	3
Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	3
What Do We Mean by Mentoring?	4
What Do We Mean by Mentoring?	4
Informal Mentoring	5
Formal Mentoring	5
Remote and Distance Mentoring	5
Mentoring Roles and Responsibilities	6
Pitfalls and Challenges	7
Benefits of Mentoring	7
Conclusion and Recommendations	8
Appendix	9

Summary

The ASMIRT Research Mentoring Program Steering Committee issues this guidance to affirm mentoring as a highly valuable professional activity. Effective mentoring enhances career development, strengthens research capacity, improves service delivery, and ultimately benefits patients and the healthcare workforce.

ASMIRT encourages its members to engage as both mentors and mentees throughout their professional lives. Mentoring is not an optional extra; it is an integral part of professional practice and leadership within medical imaging and radiation therapy.

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Introduction

Mentoring is widely recognised as a powerful tool for professional growth and career progression. Throughout a career in medical imaging or radiation therapy, individuals will transition through multiple stages of development. At different times, they may benefit from being a mentee and contribute meaningfully as a mentor.

Many professionals can identify key mentors who significantly influenced their careers. This guidance aims to:

- Promote awareness of the benefits of mentoring
- Clarify expectations of mentors and mentees
- Distinguish mentoring from other professional roles
- Support effective participation in ASMIRT's Research Mentoring Program

Mentoring strengthens individuals, teams, services, and ultimately patient care.

What Do We Mean by Mentoring?

Mentoring is a dynamic, evolving relationship that adapts to career stage and individual need. While definitions vary, common themes include:

- Support, guidance, and encouragement
- Mutual trust and respect
- Professional and personal development
- Reflection and perspective
- Confidential dialogue

Mentoring is:

- A process that enables individuals to find their own solutions
- A confidential developmental relationship
- A means of supporting significant transitions in knowledge, work, or thinking
- A supportive, reflective, and growth-oriented partnership

From these definitions, two core mentoring functions emerge:

1. Career-Related Function

The mentor acts as a coach and adviser, supporting professional performance, research development, leadership growth, and career planning.

2. Psychological and Psychosocial Function

The mentor provides perspective, encouragement, role modelling, and support in navigating professional challenges and work-life balance.

Both functions are important and often overlap.

What Do We Mean by Mentoring?

Hierarchical Mentoring

A more experienced practitioner supports a less experienced colleague. The benefit typically flows primarily toward the mentee.

This may occur:

- Informally (spontaneously and organically)
- Formally (within a structured organisational program)

Co-Mentoring

A reciprocal relationship between two autonomous practitioners. Roles may shift during meetings, and both participants may benefit equally.

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring arises naturally and is not managed by an organisation. It often develops when a practitioner seeks guidance from a respected colleague or role model.

Healthcare professionals are expected, through professional codes of conduct, to support colleagues. Informal mentoring is common within imaging and radiation therapy departments and frequently crosses professional boundaries.

Formal Mentoring

Formal mentoring occurs within structured organisational parameters. Effective formal mentoring programs typically include:

1. Clear program objectives
2. Defined participant selection processes
3. Thoughtful mentor-mentee matching
4. Training for both mentors and mentees
5. Agreed meeting frequency
6. Goal-setting processes
7. Evaluation mechanisms
8. Clear confidentiality boundaries

Formal mentoring works best when mentors volunteer and there is no conflict of interest. It should complement—not replace—informal support.

Remote and Distance Mentoring

Geographical distance need not be a barrier to effective mentoring. Remote mentoring can be delivered via:

- Videoconferencing
- Telephone
- Online platforms

An initial meeting (face-to-face or virtual) is highly beneficial in establishing rapport and expectations.

Remote mentoring is particularly valuable for practitioners in rural or remote settings, where professional isolation may occur and local mentors may be limited. Structured remote mentoring can strengthen professional culture and provide equitable access to research mentorship.

Mentoring Roles and Responsibilities

Organised into six branches by geographical area across the country, each branch has an executive committee working closely with their elected Board Member.

Effective mentoring begins with clarity of purpose and expectations. Matching should consider:

- Professional interests
- Research focus
- Values
- Personality
- Career stage

A mentee may benefit from more than one mentor over time, particularly when developing different aspects of practice or research.

The Role of the Mentor

The mentor may act as:

- Adviser
- Coach
- Role model
- Facilitator
- Confidant
- Guide
- Champion
- Communicator

To be effective, mentors should:

- Establish clear boundaries
- Manage expectations
- Encourage reflection
- Provide constructive feedback
- Maintain confidentiality
- Foster independent thinking

Respect is foundational and must be mutual.

Pitfalls and Challenges

Not everyone is suited to mentoring, and mentoring requires skill development.

Potential challenges include:

- Overdependence by the mentee
- Excessive control by the mentor
- Blurring of professional boundaries
- Conflicts of interest
- Unresolved misunderstandings

If personal relationships develop beyond professional mentoring, this should be declared and the formal mentoring relationship concluded.

Mentoring relationships may evolve, conclude, or change over time. This should be viewed as a natural and healthy part of professional growth.

Benefits of Mentoring

For Mentees

- Dedicated time for reflection
- Increased confidence
- Enhanced decision-making
- Improved research capability
- Stronger problem-solving skills
- Career clarity and direction
- Improved professional relationships

Long-term benefits include resilience, adaptability, and sustained professional growth.

For Mentors

- Professional satisfaction
- Development of leadership skills
- Enhanced communication capability
- Broader perspective
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) recognition

Mentoring is a reciprocal learning experience.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The ASMIRT Research Mentoring Program Steering Committee considers mentoring one of the most valuable activities within clinical, research, and educational environments.

Mentoring should be promoted as:

- A positive developmental opportunity
- A leadership responsibility
- A means of enhancing research capacity
- A contributor to quality patient care

Recommendations

1. Promote mentoring across imaging and radiation therapy departments.
2. Provide training for mentors and mentees.
3. Establish a well-publicised contact point for mentor availability.
4. Offer mentoring at pivotal career stages.
5. Recognise mentoring within CPD frameworks and allocate resources accordingly.
6. Ensure participation is voluntary wherever practical.
7. Include processes for matching and, where necessary, re-matching participants.
8. Establish clear confidentiality agreements.
9. Encourage cross-professional mentoring.
10. Foster mutual respect across professional groups.

Appendix

1. Checklist for Mentors and Mentees

Checklist for Mentors and Mentees

Mentors Should:

- ✓ Actively listen and challenge constructively
- ✓ Avoid solving problems on behalf of the mentee
- ✓ Meet regularly
- ✓ Maintain confidentiality
- ✓ Operate within their expertise
- ✓ Refer to other mentors when appropriate
- ✓ Be accessible and reliable
- ✓ Set clear expectations and boundaries
- ✓ Model professional behaviour
- ✓ Avoid micromanagement
- ✓ Continue to develop mentoring skills

Mentees Should:

- ✓ Arrange regular meetings
- ✓ Set clear goals and expectations
- ✓ Take responsibility for decisions
- ✓ Maintain professional boundaries
- ✓ Be proactive in maintaining contact
- ✓ Respect the mentor's time
- ✓ Treat the mentor ethically and professionally
- ✓ Accept that mentoring requests may be declined
- ✓ Work towards increasing independence



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