

The Society of British Neurological Surgeons Mentoring Programme



▶ PushFar

Welcome to The Society of British Neurological Surgeons Mentoring Programme.

What is mentoring?:

Mentoring is a process of supporting and sharing of knowledge, skills and experience with colleagues. Mentoring programmes have a proven benefit and are almost ubiquitous in leading companies with 100% of the top 50 Fortune 500 companies and 92% of all the Fortune 500 companies having mentoring programmes. Significant benefits of mentoring have also been shown in the healthcare field.

There have always been mentors in neurosurgery and I'm sure most of us would cite individuals who have been important in the development and progression of our careers so far. This programme looks to build on that traditional support of senior colleagues and to make it a more formal and structured process to holistically look at and support our careers and work/life balance.

The programme can provide all forms of mentoring but in general the idea is to have shorter periods of mentoring than the lifelong guru model that we are traditionally more used to. These mentoring relationships are set up, usually with specific focus or goals in mind. It will typically not be a colleague within your own unit but someone external bringing their expertise and advice to the relationship. One of the drivers for setting up this programme is the worrying levels of bullying, undermining and harassment along with issues of equity, diversity and inclusivity that we know are a concern in neurosurgery and other surgical specialties. It is hoped that having an external, experienced, confidential sounding board will aid reflection on any issues and ultimately improve the situation for all within our specialty.

Mentoring relationships have to be strictly confidential as some private and personal information may be discussed.

Finally, we would hope to be able to use the platform as a portal for information that could be useful for discussion within mentoring relationships eg information on wellbeing, pensions and retirement, national role/society job opportunities and other interesting topics.

What mentoring is not:

This programme is not formal appraisal or educational supervision and it cannot replace those essential activities.

What is PushFar?:

Pushfar is the mentoring platform that is hosting the programme. They provide excellent generic education materials on mentoring and how the platform works. The platform allows the registration of mentors and mentees onto the system followed by matching of

individuals to set up mentoring relationships. The platform will then help co-ordinate communication and information sharing, meeting setup, goal setting and review.

Running a neurosurgical mentoring relationship:

The platform is flexible and will allow the mentoring relationship to work in a whole variety of different ways. It is reasonable to have a fixed period for the relationship initially to make sure that it is working for both parties. The relationship can be extended as long as required if there is ongoing benefit for everyone involved.

It will probably be best to have some specific goal/s in mind although it is not essential. Some examples might be:

- I would like to develop a local/regional/national leadership role
- I would like to apply for a national clinic impact award
- I would like to set up a medico-legal practice
- I would like to increase my research output
- I would like to be involved in my local deanery/specialty advisory committee
- I would like to discuss/examine the relationship with my colleagues
- I would like to think about making changes to my work/life balance
- I would like to start planning for my retirement

Suggested structure for a neurosurgical mentoring meeting:

The PushFar platform suggests a time commitment of 1-2 hours per month but this may not be possible with busy clinical practices. The key is to have clear expectations on both sides and plan any commitments well in advance to try and avoid unnecessary last-minute cancellations. The following is a possible structure to a mentoring meeting:

Clinical practice

- Positives (successful cases, new service, compliments)
- Negative (complications, complaints, medico-legal cases)

Non-clinical practice

- Leadership roles
- Educational roles
- Research roles

Relationships with colleagues

Specific goals

Non-NHS

- Private practice
- Medicolegal practice

Non-work

- Personal/family situation
- Wellbeing (physical and psychological)
- Health

This is only a guide and the mentor and mentee can conduct the meetings in the way that suits their relationship best.

Summary

Thank you for being involved in this national mentoring programme. If there are any problems that you are experiencing, please try the PushFar support portal

<https://www.pushfar.com/support/>

or alternatively do please be in touch with me

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On behalf of the SBNS Council