



# The Medical Student Mentoring Family: Improving peer mentoring through longitudinal mentoring relationships



GOLD HUMANISM HONOR SOCIETY  
THE ARNOLD P. GOLD FOUNDATION

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## Background

The benefits of mentoring in the medical field have been highlighted in a number of studies<sup>1</sup>. Peer mentoring, in particular, has the potential to improve the educational experience of both upper and lower classmen in UGME. Underclassmen have expressed a preference for peer over faculty mentors in guiding them through certain milestones in medical school, such as the transition from pre-clinical to clinical years<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, taking on a mentoring role has been shown to enhance personal and professional satisfaction as well as increase mentors desire to teach<sup>3</sup>.

## Objectives

In this project, the Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS) chapter at UConn SOM set out to develop a mentoring program that would:

1. Improve peer mentoring at UConn SOM
2. Be longitudinal in nature, spanning all four years of training;
3. Provide continuity in mentoring relationships;
4. Allow students to benefit from simultaneously playing the role of mentor and mentee in one group setting.

## Methods

Starting in the fall of 2012, students from the GHHS launched its "Medical Student Mentoring Families" program. The program is mandatory for the MS1 class but voluntary for the MS2-MS4 classes. Participating students were broken up into 31 "families" each consisting of 1-3 students from each of the four classes. The families are designed to persist throughout each student's time at UConn, taking on new MS1's as their MS4's graduate. As a result, each student will progress from the role of mentee to mentor over their career at UConn. Families are encouraged to meet six times throughout the year, arranged around particular milestones in each of the four years. GHHS members serve as the med family organizers. This role will be passed down from one inducted class to the next.

## Med student roles

- MS4 – Family organizer. Responsible for scheduling a time for your family to meet and picking a fun/convenient locations for each meeting
- MS3 – Family scribe. Responsible for taking down bullet points of each meeting to share with any members who may have missed the meeting and med family organizers. Lead meeting in MS4's absence.
- MS2 – Primary contact between MS1 and upperclassmen
- MS1 – Have fun and be in touch with other MS1's in your group

## Curriculum

### Meeting 1 - September

- MS1 – basic introduction to medical school and curriculum
- MS2 – setting the stage for second year
- MS3 – Rotation check in

### Meeting 2 - October

- MS1 – anatomy check-in, exam 1 follow up, extracurricular overview, mental health resources
- MS2 – exam 1 and book advice
- MS2 – Rotation check-in, sharing anecdotes

### Meeting 3 - December

- MS1 – exam 2 follow up, reflection on med school study strategies to date, exam 3 study tips, med school electives, summer plan brainstorm
- MS2 – Exam 2 study tips, step 1 registration advice, introduce concept of setting a step 1 study schedule
- MS3 – Rotation check-in, step 2 registration advice, encouragement for self-care over Christmas break

### Meeting 4 - February

- MS1 – exam 3 follow up, re-evaluate studying, summer plan follow up
- MS2 – boards schedule review and encouragement to stick to it, MS3 schedule advising
- MS3 – MS4 scheduling, contact MS4's in your field, step 2 follow up
- All years – mental health check-in

### Meeting 5 - April

- MS1 – summer plan follow up, leadership roles for volunteer spots/interest groups
- MS2 – step 1 check-in, MS3 schedule follow up
- MS3 - VSAS

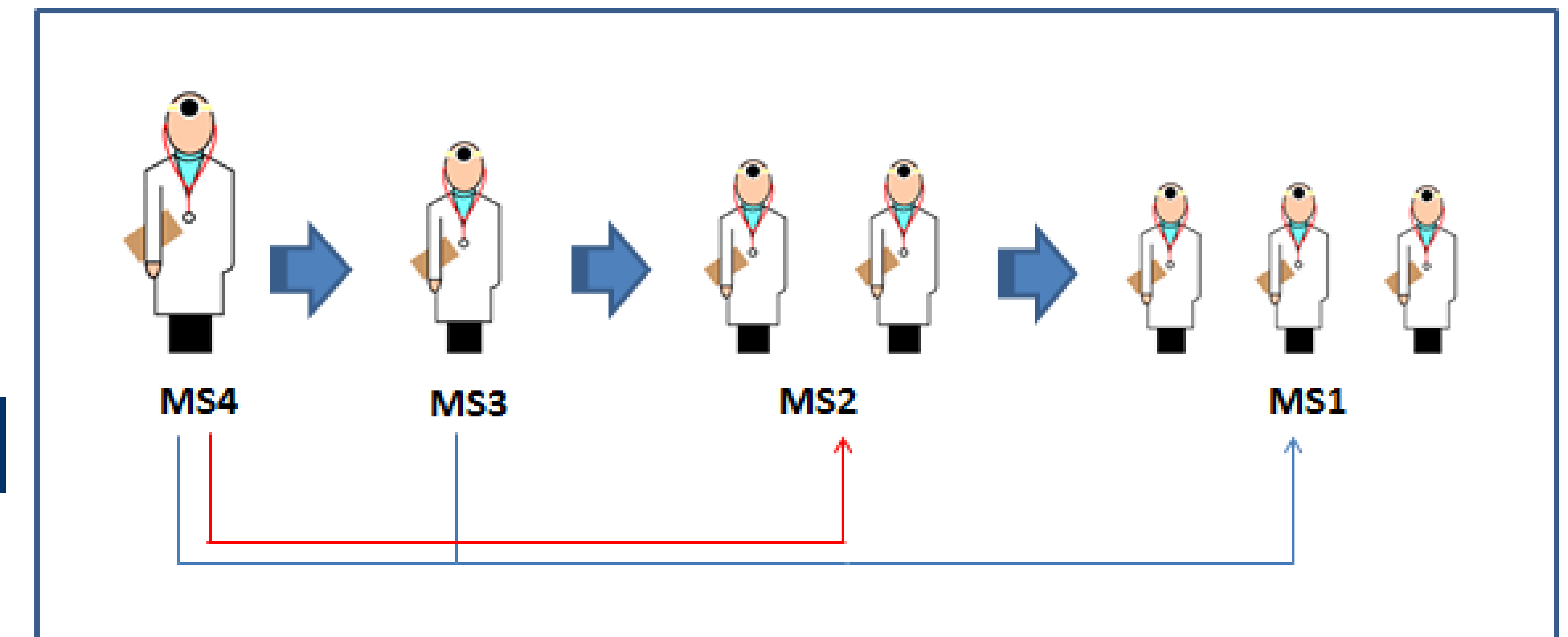
### Meeting 6 - May

- MS1 – summer plan final, encourage time to relax
- MS2 – step 1, starting clinical rotations
- MS3 – guide to taking over the family, discuss career plans

### Summer

- Contact/facebook incoming MS1s
- Try to arrange one summer activity

## What is a med family?



## Outcomes

### To date

Because the program is in its pilot year, feedback has been qualitative in nature and elicited from MS3 comments following each meeting. Overall feedback has been positive to date.

Sample MS3 responses include:

- "The meeting went well. Not everyone was in attendance, but those who were asked questions regarding career options, how to study for OS1, what third year is like, and school/life balance. Everyone agreed that the meeting was helpful and it seemed as though all were excited to have another meeting in a few months."
- "We had our first meeting last week; our 4th year Jess hosted. We started with introductions and went around with Q&A. The big theme was finding shadowing and research opportunities as a first and second year-Jess and I offered to field any questions and help put our family in touch with good attendings to shadow."
- "Our first meeting went well. With the 1st years we spent time discussing how to spend their first summer. We talked about how to look into funding for research and potential opportunities for traveling abroad. We also talked about different resources to use to study for exams. Overall it was great meeting people from other classes. Now that we've all met, they feel more comfortable emailing the group if any questions pop up during the year."

### Future Directions

At the conclusion of this academic year we plan to expand feedback with a survey to all med student family participants. Survey results will be used to expand and improve the program in years to come. Sample survey questions will include:

- Graduating class
- Student age
- Did your family communicate outside of assigned meetings? (if yes, how?)
- Likert scale measures of how well the goals of med families were explained and how helpful the program was
- Most useful component of the med families
- Student's intention to continue participation in upcoming academic year

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