

# Peer mentorship can be more effective, accessible than traditional mentorship in academic medicine

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Peer mentorship is a critical and more accessible option for professional and personal growth than traditional mentor-mentee relationships, according to a new paper from the University of Colorado Anschutz

Medical Campus.

The paper, published in the *Journal of Investigative Medicine*, finds that peer mentorship, especially in [academic medicine](#), is more inclusive and accessible than traditional hierarchical relationships. Furthermore, the flexibility afforded by participating in peer mentorship groups transcends typical academic settings through online blogs and social media groups, which have become critical in the era of COVID19.

By examining the strengths and weaknesses of various mentorship models, including trainee programs, formal mentorship, grant-based training, ad-hoc relationships and social media groups, researchers have found that peer mentorship is better suited to foster success, including among underrepresented groups. This point is underscored by the success of the authors' own peer mentoring group on the Anschutz campus.

"We started our group because we felt that, as women in [academic medicine](#), we really needed to support each other," says Melanie Cree-Green, lead author and associate professor of pediatrics-endocrinology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. "Our group of eight women formed three years ago and meets every three weeks. In that time, we have had five promotions, major grant funding—and other positive career milestones that happened thanks in part to our support for one another," says Jill Kaar, co-author and associate professor of pediatrics-endocrinology at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

Success of these groups is contingent on the establishment of guidelines and rules to ensure members are all on the same page and discord is avoided. "There are ground rules: consistency in meeting, everything stays in confidence, accountability," says Kaar.

The importance of flexible peer-mentoring models has possibly never been more evident than during the Covid-19 pandemic. "The peer mentorship during the pandemic has been amazing," says Cree-Green. "A physician Facebook group that I belong to with a few thousand others in the U.S. has been 2-5 weeks ahead of what's in the news re COVID-related topics—sharing instructions on how to print ventilator splitters, heparin dosing, ventilator settings. Those groups just started booming, and they absolutely made a huge difference to patient care."

The paper provides a framework on how to establish guidelines, encouraging those in medical academia to seek support from other people to form a foundation for their careers. "Peer mentorship is a very different kind of mentoring than we're traditionally taught," says Cree-Green. "It can be very effective to communicate with and understand your peers, and we want to encourage people to form their own mentor groups, especially as things are changing so rapidly. It's not a new concept, but it's an underutilized one."

**More information:** Melanie Cree-Green et al, Peer mentoring for professional and personal growth in academic medicine, *Journal of Investigative Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1136/jim-2020-001391](https://doi.org/10.1136/jim-2020-001391)

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