



MEDICAL STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Feedback as a Means of Improvement

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There isn't a single person reading this article that is "perfect" – sorry! Each one of us likely strives for perfection but fully knows that we cannot be perfect in everything. Our goal then is to always learn something and become better, which bodes the question of how we can continue to become a better person each and every day. The primary way we become better is with feedback, both self-feedback and that given by others. One of the most discussed topics in undergraduate and graduate medical education today is the process of feedback. What is the best way of giving feedback? How often should we give feedback? What about *quality* vs. *quantity* of feedback?

If medical school does one thing aside from providing an education, it is learning the basics about giving and receiving feedback. I will share some of the tips that I have learned. Feedback has been an integral part of my medical education as I went through a pre-clinical problem-based group learning curriculum.

The single biggest factor in both the quality and quantity of feedback you receive, really, is you. If you are open to feedback and try to improve based upon it, you are more likely to be given feedback. If you tend to get defensive about every piece of feedback or are one of those individuals that "has an explanation for everything," you will receive very little feedback, and it will probably be of a lower quality. If you want feedback, you should also actively seek feedback from others. The sky is the limit in terms of who you get it from – attendings, residents, nurses, techs and even fellow students. Almost everyone looks at something different and can provide you with a different perspective.

It is easier to give positive feedback than constructive criticism, and this is why the majority of all feedback is positive. Many people prefer not to give "negative" feedback or constructive criticism because they fear that they will offend someone or that the person will take it personally. Sometimes you need to be proactive to get the constructive feedback. If you are open and genuinely care about what you hear, you will find that it will become more of a normal occurrence to get that kind of feedback.

Why is this important to us in emergency medicine? Every shift will provide you with a different group of people – staff, patients, residents and attendings. This leads to different people that can provide you with feedback after each shift. It is important as a student to learn the art of feedback. The first thing to do is reflect on your performance yourself and try to think what you could change or what you did well. After you do this, try to get a couple of minutes with the resident and attending that you worked with for the shift to ask what you can do better. Get both the good and the bad. Maybe you did an awesome job with your differential but could improve upon your presentation and procedural skills. You will find that if you act upon your feedback, your feedback will improve in both quantity and quality. This translates down the road to better evaluations, better letters, and most importantly, becoming a better person and physician.



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