Mentors ‘manipulated, even threatened’ by some students

By Alistair Kleebauer  @alistairbauer

Placement mentors are being ‘manipulated’ and some even subjected to violent threats by nursing students, new research reveals.

A study by Birmingham City University has uncovered alarming examples of students’ reactions to negative feedback from their mentor about their performance on placement, including making threats and allegations of bullying.

Half of a nursing student’s pre-registration degree is assessed through placements in healthcare settings, where they are assigned a nurse as their mentor. The mentor supports the student and also assesses whether they have achieved the required level of skills and competencies.

Researchers found that after receiving negative feedback from their mentor, some students use manipulative behaviour in an attempt not to fail.

Senior lecturer in adult nursing Louise Hunt interviewed 31 participants who were either mentors, practice education facilitators or link lecturers. All worked in the NHS or the private sector and had failed at least one student in a practical assessment.

The study identified four patterns of behaviour used to influence the mentor:

» Ingratiator – attempts to curry favour by being charming, obliging or emotionally exploitative. Methods used to sway mentors range from bringing in cakes to hugging or crying.

» Diverter – plays on factors unrelated to performance, including illness, personal circumstances or disability. One mentor said a student noted his washing machine flooding as a reason for poor performance.

» Disparager – challenges their mentor in belittling or professionally harmful ways. One method is to question the mentor’s competence, another is...

A special service has been held at York Minster to mark 100 years of the RCN.

Conducted by the Bishop of Beverley, last week’s service was attended by civic and nursing leaders, including RCN general secretary Janet Davies.

The college’s centenary banner was carried by RCN Yorkshire and the Humber board member Paul Smith and agenda committee member Jane-Elizabeth Tooke.

Members of the Townswomen’s Guild presented the college with the handmade marching banner earlier this year, which has since been touring the country for centenary events.

A BANNER YEAR
IN QUOTES

‘Former nurses may feel a lot has changed. It comes flooding back’

Maurya Cushlow
North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust executive director of nursing and midwifery
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‘At a time of growing uncertainty for the health service, it is more important than ever to have continuity’

Dame Donna Kinnair
RCN director of nursing, policy and practice
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to accuse the mentor of harassment or bullying.

Aggressor – engages in open hostility towards their mentor, including verbal or physical threats. One mentor who did not live locally found a handwritten note from a student on their doorstep, while another was threatened in a car park by a student’s boyfriend.

Dr Hunt said every mentor she had spoken to had provided information about at least one of these types of behaviour.

‘The profession is reluctant to talk about it, but unless we acknowledge that some students are behaving like this towards their mentors, we are not going to start looking at solutions,’ she said.

The study, published in Nurse Education in Practice, identified that students who did not use coercive tactics, but instead wanted frank feedback, tried to improve their performance.

Previous studies from Glasgow Caledonian University and London South Bank University identified that mentors can be reluctant to fail underperforming students.

The Birmingham City University study recommended helping mentors to understand when it is not their own performance but the student’s that is below standard, as well as making mentors aware of the coercive strategies used so they are less likely to work.

Ena Cafferkey Hearing

Ebola nurse ‘relieved’ after NMC clears her of misconduct in airport screening process

Scottish nurse Pauline Cafferkey (pictured right), who recovered from the Ebola virus, spoke of her relief after being cleared of misconduct by the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

An NMC hearing in Edinburgh last week found three charges against her were not proven, so she may continue to practise as a nurse.

Ms Cafferkey worked as a public health nurse near Glasgow before volunteering in Sierra Leone in 2014, where she became infected with Ebola. It was alleged that on her return she allowed an incorrect temperature to be recorded during screening at Heathrow Airport.

It was also claimed she left the screening area without reporting her correct temperature or telling staff she had taken paracetamol. She was cleared for onward travel but awoke feeling ‘very unwell’ the next day, when she was diagnosed.

But the NMC panel ruled that Ms Cafferkey had not set out to mislead Public Health England (PHE) screening staff.

Panel chair Timothy Cole said: ‘It was inconceivable that she would leave the safe environment of the PHE screening area but for the fact that she was already seriously ill.

‘The panel therefore concluded that her judgement had already been significantly impaired.’

The panel heard the airport screening area was ‘disorganised and even chaotic’ and the nurse was exhausted after a 22-hour journey.

Outside the hearing, her lawyer said Ms Cafferkey was ‘relieved the process is at an end’ and would not knowingly place anyone in danger.

NMC chief executive Jackie Smith said: ‘The referral from PHE showed a highly unusual set of circumstances that clearly required a thorough investigation.’