

Grace, Inspiration, Fulfillment, Timeless, Soulful (G.I.F.T.S.): Using Digital Tools to Leverage Staff Experiences for Mentorship and Leadership Development at an Academic Medical Center

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Background: Mentoring and developing the healthcare workforce is one of the most challenging, and rewarding tasks there is. Learning firsthand from experiences of peers, leaders, and mentors is essential for professional development and this needs to happen consistently in our busy and complex healthcare practice environments. We present a real-world application of podcasts as a low-cost, sustainable platform for professional and leadership development and mentorship of the healthcare workforce by the healthcare workforce.

Objective: The purpose of this practice improvement project was to explore the effectiveness of the use of podcasts for mentoring and leadership development by sharing professional life experiences and teaching by example.

Methods: This digital intervention was implemented within a large quaternary care academic medical center, in the United States. Faculty Development leadership within the General Internal Medicine division created a series of podcasts to learn from the professional journeys of mid and late-career physicians and scientists. Each interview focused on the individual's professional experiences, successes, and failures, as well as the lessons learned along the way. Each podcast episode was 15-20 minutes in length and was made available to all staff within the division, and thus far have received over 1000 hits (views and audio downloads). Three brief surveys addressing efficacy and satisfaction with the podcasts were conducted within the General Internal Medicine Division. One was targeted to the non-physician staff members, one to physician staff members, and one to the eight interviewees to gauge their satisfaction with participation in this podcast series.

Results: Among the non-physician responders of the survey, 50% indicated they had listened to at least one podcast episode of the series and 55% of them indicated that it had impacted their personal career and life goals. Among those who indicated they had not listened to any podcasts, the biggest reason provided was lack of time. Among the physician responders, over 80% indicated they had listened to at least one podcast, but again, among those indicating they did not listen to any podcast, lack of time was the biggest hurdle. Among these responders, over 78% indicated that the podcasts had impacted their life choices. Key messages which resonated the most from responders included: 'taking one day at a time', 'focus on the human dimension', 'everyone has struggles', and 'persistence and hard work pay off'. The responders to the interviewee-targeted survey indicated that all interviewees were satisfied with their podcast and when asked if and what they learned about themselves through the podcast experience, they indicated the following: 'the experience was life-affirming', they 'enjoyed the reflecting of their past experiences' and 'there is more resilience in me than I ever realized'.

Conclusion: Podcasts are an effective means to promote mentorship and professional leadership development through dissemination of staff experiences. They allow for ongoing and asynchronous learning and development in a busy healthcare environment. Our podcast interviewees expressed their vulnerability with honesty and encouraged the listeners to embrace this without judgement. In many respects, the lines between mentors and mentees were blurred as we learned about staff experiences and journeys. We found that podcasts are a sustainable way to integrate leadership development in settings with limited resources and allow for wide dissemination across different professional roles within healthcare.