Rotation Feedback

Please take time to talk honestly and sincerely to your supervising residents and any faculty you present to about how you are doing and what you could improve upon. I would recommend that you try to get feedback every shift or every other shift. The ideal time is at least an hour before the end of a shift to allow time to tie-up loose ends and complete charting before pass-ons.  Ask for honest constructive criticism (so you can improve and so you know where you really are doing so far) about:

1. What you have been doing well

2. Specific ways you have not done well (focusing on specific circumstances and issues)

3. Ways you could improve and do better (inventing options for mutual gain)

4. Finish in a positive and encouraging fashion

You can and should use the core competencies as a guideline for discussion.  To make it even easier, you can try giving them an honest assessment of how you think you are doing first, with your perceived deficiencies and need for improvement.  Always try to use specific examples and details whenever possible.

In general, good guidelines for potentially difficult conversations like these are to:

1. Make protected time, in a comfortable space for it, away from potential distractions (e.g. don't do it just before shift change or during a super busy time).  Try to plan this ahead of time.

2.  Try to think and act like a 3rd party mediator would: thinking of both sides when speaking, to invite (not impose) joint exploration, acting as partners toward figuring out a joint solution.

3.  Separate the people (try to be polite, courteous, honest, friendly, and on the same team) from any problems or issues.

4.  Explore and acknowledge both sides by asking open ended questions; focusing on listening; sharing past experiences; and understanding each other more; and staying focused on positive goals.  Listen for, address and acknowledge any complex feelings (usually present on both sides) that come up, directly and openly.  Assume good intentions as well as self-interest (e.g. a complicated situation) on both sides.  Try to avoid any defensiveness, judgments, blame or negative criticism.

5.  Look at standards as a basis for the discussion: what great sub-interns generally know and are able to do (I've attached the SAEM clerkship guide as an example of great suggestions for improvement and mastering EM as a student).

Realize that there is always difficulty in separating the feedback process from evaluation in general.  However, they are linked together, particular in the category of professionalism and ability to accept constructive criticism.  This rotation has been designed to be pass-fail only, and we do not award honors.  Ideally, the evaluator is a role-model in each of the core competencies being evaluated too!

Furthermore, most rotators from USC who apply to EM will have evaluations from residents and attendings ranging from very good to excellent regarding their core competencies, and that's OK!    The best future residents are those who can honestly ask for help, acknowledge their deficiencies, and then work hard to correct and overcome them.  Nobody is expected to be perfect at this stage of the game or else you wouldn't even need to do EM residency at all.

Finally, the best feedback occurs immediately, at the bedside or soon afterwards and is not delayed.  So get to work: all of you will be happier when you talk more and expectations are expressed and understood, and if anything needs improvement, you will get hard at work to correct any deficiencies.

Feel free to contact me with any issues or concerns, particularly if there are performance or interpersonal issues that are not successfully resolved.

Thanks!

Jonathan Wagner, M.D.