

INTRODUCTION

The intensity and fast pace of medical school necessitates that students tackle and bounce back from challenges quickly. The **COMPeer Mentor Program** connects current medical students for support with upper class students or alumni who experienced similar challenges while in medical school. Mentors help their mentees feel uniquely understood and provide advice and encouragement based upon their hindsight.

A search of the literature did not find any mentoring programs where students were matched with mentors based upon challenges they have in common. Many mentoring programs for medical students matched students based upon personality, interests, or demographics; their focus was on academic performance, career planning, and counseling students on difficulties.^{1,2} The most similar mentoring programs found in the literature were in undergraduate or international settings and focused on matching students randomly or on a single commonality such as professional interests, minority status, research goals, or year in school.^{2,3}

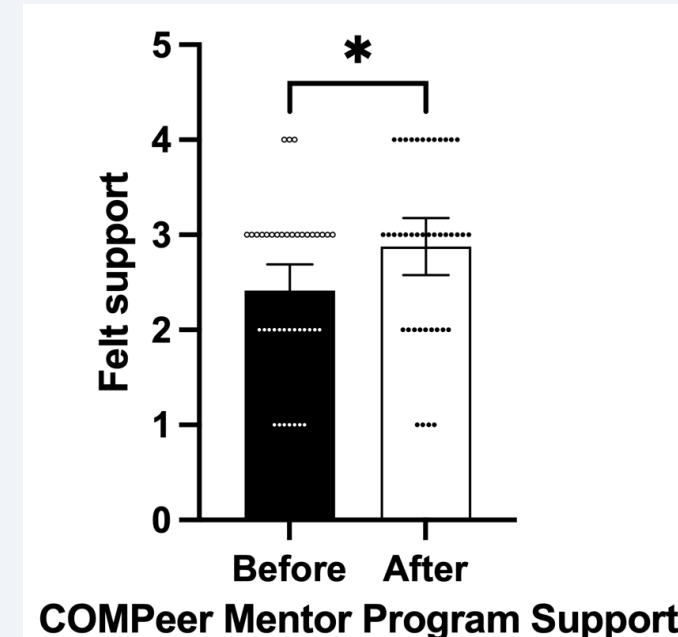
These programs established mentoring relationships based upon a single factor rather than a combination of challenges which can transcend demographics and interests. Based on these findings, it appears that this study would contribute to a new research area given its focus on matching students with similar challenges and shared experiences.

METHODS

Pre-mentoring questions were part of the Mentor Request Form, and post-mentoring questions were sent to the 96 students mentored since the program's inception in February 2020. Surveys asked about the impact of challenges on academic and personal lives, feelings of support, impact of the mentor, and suggestions for improving the COMPeer Mentor program. Surveys and this handout are accessible via the QR code below.

Statistical analysis was completed using GraphPad Prism version 9.1.2 for macOS. Wilcoxon signed rank tests, one-sample Wilcoxon signed rank test, descriptive analysis, and thematic qualitative analysis were used to answer the research questions.

RESULTS

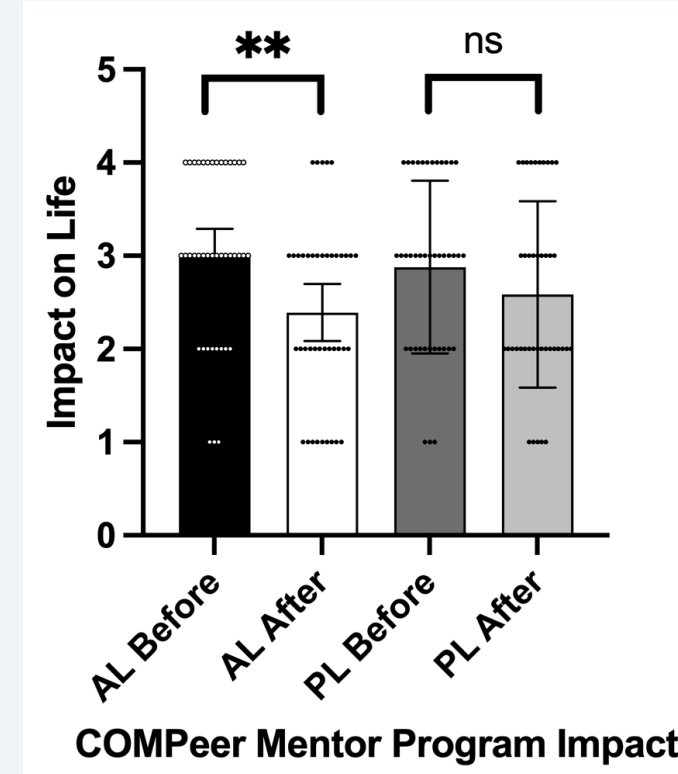


45% of mentees completed the pre-/post-surveys

COMPeer Program interactions:

- improved ability to deal with challenge(s), $P < 0.01$
- improved self-confidence, $P < 0.01$
- reduced stress levels, $P < 0.01$
- increased feelings of connection & support, $P = 0.02$

Impact of challenges on academic life decreased after match, $P < 0.01$



Three themes for program improvement emerged:

1. 40% wanted increased follow-up/time with mentors
2. 16% desired more support resources
3. 10% requested an enhanced mentor matching process.

AL = Academic Life and PL = Personal Life

CONCLUSIONS

Medical school is a time of significant academic stress, compounded with personal life challenges creating an environment often detrimental to students' mental health. Stress is negatively related to academic performance, and stress reduction can often lead to improved academic performance.⁴ Effective stress management and adequate self-confidence increase the likelihood that a graduate will be able to overcome stress during their future careers.⁵

Continued reform of the medical education system and implementation of a variety of mental health resources such as the COMPeer Mentor Program are needed to improve the mental health of future physicians. These changes have the potential to provide better care for patients.

This matching process shows promising results and highlights some important themes for program improvement. Once improvements are made, the authors hope to collaborate with other medical schools to offer similar challenge-based matching mentorship programs at their institutions.

MENTEE EXAMPLES



Mentee A **failed boards** twice and has severe **anxiety**. She is also experiencing **financial hardship**.

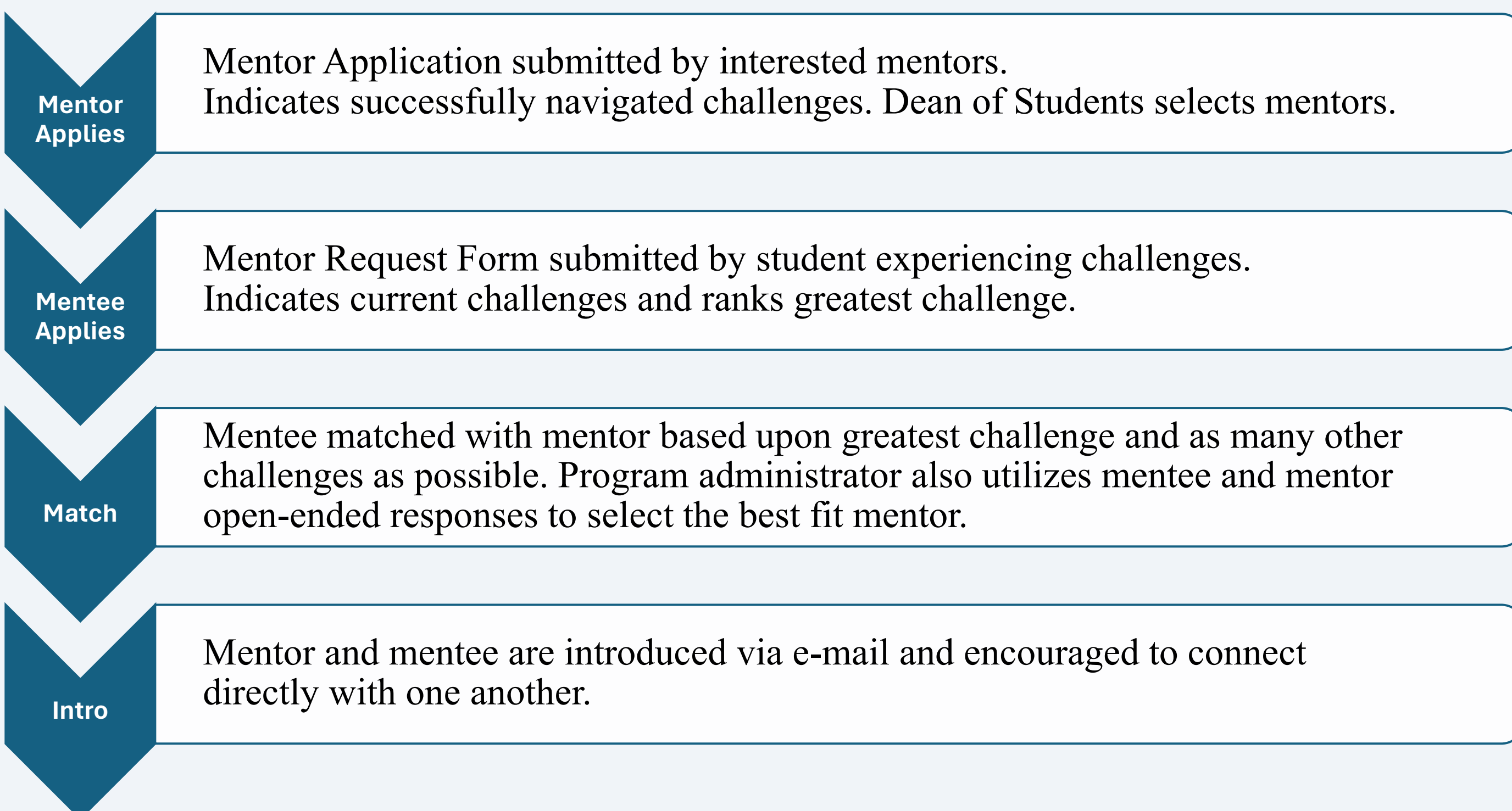


Mentee B just found out they will **repeat the year** and they are experiencing **imposter syndrome**, and **depression**.



Mentee C has **ADHD** and struggles to identify effective study strategies and concentration techniques. Also, his **mother recently died**, and he is feeling **isolated**.

MATCHING PROCESS



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sought to determine if participation in the COMPeer Mentor Program leads to positive outcomes for mentees. The following questions guided our research.

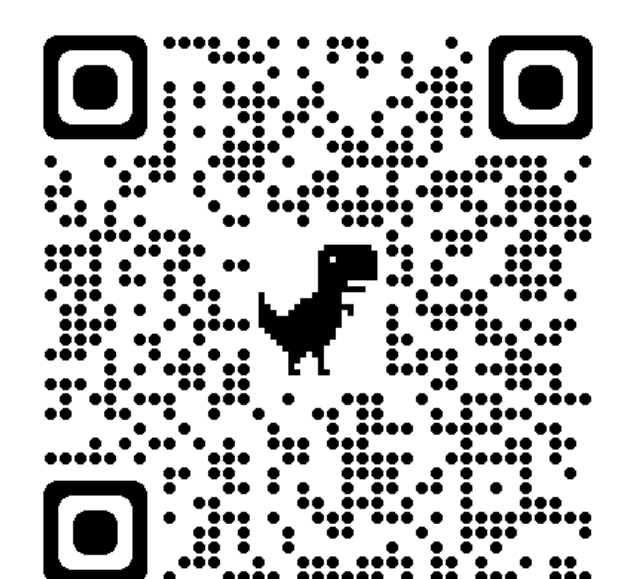
- 1) Are there differences in participant's **feelings of connectedness and support** before and after participating in the program?
- 2) Are there differences in the **self-reported impact of academic and personal challenges** on the participant before and after participating in the program?
- 3) Did interactions with the COMPeer Mentor improve the mentee's **ability to deal with the challenges** indicated in the Mentor Request Form?
- 4) Did interactions with the COMPeer Mentor **improve the mentee's stress levels** related to the challenges indicated in the Mentor Request Form?
- 5) Did interactions with the COMPeer Mentor **improve the mentee's self-confidence** in dealing with the challenges indicated in the Mentor Request Form?
- 6) What **changes** should be made to improve the COMPeer Mentor Program?

NEXT STEPS

- Establish clear **mentor expectations** to include multiple interactions with mentees.
- Invite the classes of 2020-2027 to complete the new and improved **mentor application form**.
- Offer **annual mentor training** highlighting support resources, expectations, and case studies.
- Conduct **focus group with mentees** to better understand additional resource needs.
- **Automate matching process** to speed up match time, improve confidentiality, allow mentee to rank mentors, and ensure mentor has time to dedicate to the mentee at the time of request.
- **Automatically deploy post-mentorship surveys** 8 weeks after first connection.

REFERENCES

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