

Review of the HSRAANZ Mentoring Scheme

Here a mentee and their mentor talk about their experience with the scheme.

Why did you participate in the Mentoring Scheme?

Mentee—I had been meaning to engage in a formal mentoring program for a while and the HSRAANZ scheme appealed to me in that it aimed to match mentors-mentees with similar backgrounds. I saw the scheme as a fantastic opportunity to formalize my career planning. My current boss already provided me with professional development but she was very encouraging of the program and we both felt it was important to have a mentor outside my current working environment.

Mentor— I believe that it is important to mentor people starting out in their career. I remember how important inspiring mentors were to me at that stage in my life (and indeed still are!) and how much I valued their guidance and insight. I thought – well, now it is time for me to do the same! I thought at this point in my own career, I might have some ‘learnings’ to share! I had also had some previous experience in career coaching and mentoring for NHMRC TRIP Fellows that I found rewarding.

Did the scheme meet your expectations? How?

Mentee—The scheme exceeded my expectations in every way. My mentor (Karen) and I met quarterly and I am amazed by the impact that these meetings have had on my current role and career planning. Karen listened to my concerns and went through my CV in great detail and gave me feedback on where the gaps are and how I might direct my professional development. My experience has been solely in academic environments and it was fantastic to get the perspective of a mentor with a research background but who works in the bureaucracy, her experience is vast and she has extensive networks across both settings. Karen’s encouragement provided me with the confidence to ask questions of myself and others, and to start developing my own networks. Karen has been incredibly supportive and her advice has been invaluable.

Mentor—Very much so! I met face-to-face with my mentee (Julia) every 3 months over a coffee or lunch. We talked about her expectations, aspirations and skills to date. Then we started to craft a career strategy to get her to where she wanted to go in the future. I think this helped Julia to really consider what her career goals are and what the avenues to get her there might be (it will be interesting to hear what Julia has to say?!).

What did you get out of participating in the Scheme?

Mentee— I gained knowledge, skills, and a different perspective on career development. In particular, Karen highlighted the different career paths available to me based on my background which gave me a great deal of clarity in moving forward with my career. There was a perfect balance of big picture thinking and planning as well as practical advice. Karen alerted me about grant/fellowship opportunities, networking strategies, and relevant professional bodies to join. Karen also introduced me to professionals in her networks with similar interests to me; speaking with these professionals was very useful. Karen was available via email and phone between meetings if I felt there were relevant issues/opportunities to discuss. This support was wonderful as often times issues arose between our quarterly meetings.

Mentor—The pleasure of meeting Julia – a very talented, intelligent young woman – and a pleasure to mentor! The joy of supporting someone in the early stages of their career. I also recognised that I probably had gained more experience over the years than I had realised and could help to link Julia to people working in a range of health care and research organizations.

Were there any unexpected benefits?

Mentee—From the very first meeting I knew the program would be beneficial. I have found myself talking with colleagues, friends and family about the program and they all agree that I was lucky to have a mentor as experienced and successful as Karen. The knowledge and skills gained have been fantastic but I am also more excited about my career as a result of participating in the program. I am more ambitious, savvy and forward thinking.

Mentor —Helping to open an early career researcher’s eyes to a range of career options and watch Julia actively adopt strategies to build her own career.

Would you recommend the Scheme to others?

Mentee— I certainly would. I think it is vital for those early in their career to engage in schemes like these. The scheme has certainly opened my eyes to the wonderful opportunities available to those with experience in health services research. I have learned a great deal and I hope to continue to remain in contact with Karen when the scheme formally closes.

Mentor — The mentoring scheme is an important avenue of guidance for people starting out in health services research which is a niche area in many respects. People come from a range of educational and experiential backgrounds so career paths may not always be clear. Consequently, it can also be tricky to find career mentors unlike in other more historically ‘defined’ industries. As a mentor, the time commitment was not too onerous. In between meetings, we communicated via emails and Twitter.

I am glad to have contributed and hope Julia found it useful and rewarding.