

Five feedback strategies for intensive care medicine trainees

Why these strategies?

Feedback in the ICU challenges supervisors and trainees, and they often have different views about what it is and what it means. These strategies for trainees are drawn from a four-year research project to understand feedback in intensive care medicine. They are based on approaches that other trainees have found beneficial.

Strategy 1. Raise feedback

- Intensive care medicine trainees can find it difficult to get information about their performance.
- Ask if there are things you can focus on for improvement.
- Don't expect feedback to always work.
- Don't expect useful feedback to always feel comfortable.

Strategy 2. Look beyond the consultant

- Frequently, consultants are not working at the same time and in the same place as trainees.
- Trainees report valuable information can come from other registrars, colleagues from other professions, and patients or families.
- Ask others about your performance – nurses, physiotherapists, other speciality trainees, and other consultants.

Strategy 3. Acknowledge the inherent uncertainty in intensive care

- It can sometimes be very difficult for intensive care doctors to know if a particular clinical approach is working or not.
- Discuss with colleagues, peers or supervisors how they manage the uncertainty alongside knowing whether you've done a task well.

Strategy 4. Gather information about your performance

- In ICU, patient outcomes are often not a reliable indicator of good clinical performance.
- Try to articulate what a 'good job' looks like – consider what others do in similar situations and why that might be worthwhile.
- Seek information about your performance and consider how this compares with a 'good job'.
- Trainees who keep logs report them to be very helpful; they can create a critical distance around quality and progress.

Strategy 5. Build a culture of feedback

- The easiest place to start is by deliberately having feedback conversations with those who are more junior than you.
- Develop your own feedback skills by observing someone who does feedback well and compare their approaches with what you do, in order to improve.
- If you are comfortable, show others how to learn from feedback by soliciting, receiving, and responding to comments about your performance in a group situation.
- Discuss in a group how you might do a 'good job' in challenging or ambiguous situations.



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