

CORRESPONDENCE

Response to the letter entitled ‘On finding acceptance’



We thank Chen¹ for sharing his personal reflection in response to our recent article² advocating for securing the role of the clinician-scientist in oncology. As poignantly described by Chen,¹ mentorship is a key element in the long and often winding road to becoming a clinician-scientist. Every individual’s definition of success is unique to themselves, and the journey towards attaining this should be as important as the destination. To this extent, the role of the mentor should not be to tell, but to illuminate, nurture and make believe what is feasible in one’s desired path.³

It is also important to acknowledge that the experience of mentorship may often differ depending on one’s background and geographical circumstances. Indeed, it has been recently reported that some underrepresented minorities in oncology are less likely to have mentors, let alone effective mentor–mentee relationships.⁴ Hence, efforts in carefully tailoring initiatives to such subgroups should be prioritised to enable everyone to achieve their fullest potential. As we have previously highlighted, representation, and in some instances precedence, is key to ensuring that important scientific discoveries can be made without boundaries.

In order to support the educational and career development of young oncologists, the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) has launched several initiatives over the years.^{5,6} Among them, the virtual mentorship programme pairs young oncologists with experienced leaders in the field, including established clinician-scientists. The primary mission of this collaborative initiative between the ESMO Young Oncologists and ESMO Women for Oncology Committees is to provide opportunities for those with unmet career development needs, especially those who lack access to mentors locally. Additionally, small-group mentorship sessions are also being held at the annual ESMO congress and all other ESMO-organised specialised conferences throughout the year to enable young oncologists to continue open and timely conversations addressing topics important to their professional development.

The ultimate goal as an oncologist and/or clinician-scientist is to ensure that we can continue to deliver the best for our patients with cancer. No one should be left behind, and we sometimes need our mentors to make us believe.

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