

MENTORSHIP PROFILE:

ACG's MENTORING PROGRAM for GI FELLOWS



Mohit Girotra, MD

The College supports the career development of GI fellows-in-training through a program that matches them with mentors. To learn more about the benefits of this program, we interviewed Dr. Mohit Girotra who, as a fellow, had two mentors, one of which was Carol A. Burke, MD, FACG. Dr. Girotra is an international medical graduate from India who finished his residency and chief residency at Johns Hopkins University/Sinai Internal Medicine Program in Baltimore and subsequently completed a Gastroenterology/Hepatology fellowship at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in Little Rock, Arkansas. Currently, Dr. Girotra serves as an Assistant Professor and staff physician at UAMS, while aligning his training with that of his wife. He will join Stanford University next year for advanced therapeutic endoscopy training.

ACG: What are your thoughts about the importance of mentorship?

Dr. Girotra: The word MENTOR itself defines its significance, M = Motivator, E = Empowers, N = Nurtures, T = Teacher, O = Originator, R = Role Model. There are so many facets to art of mentorship that, in fact, it may not be possible for one person to fulfil all these roles.

A mentor serves primarily as a role model—a person considered as a standard of excellence to be imitated, although a mentor may also serve as an advisor when providing recommendations regarding a decision or a course of action. However, the mentor's role does not necessarily begin or end there. Other roles undertaken by a mentor may include: personal support/guidance, career advising, and collaboration on research/projects.

In medicine, I consider four mentors to be of quintessential significance for young physicians: First, a Clinical Mentor, who not only serves as a role model, but also as a hands-on teacher in clinics, wards or in procedures. Second, a Research Mentor, who may help one identify areas of research interest, generate scientific queries, teach how to design studies, assist with statistical methodology and the art of writing manuscripts. Third, a Career Mentor, who is usually a well-recognized figure in one's area of clinical/research interest, and who can inspire by their leadership philosophy, strategy and style. A Career Mentor is a source of personal leadership lessons, and helps connect with other renowned experts, helps form bridges for collaborative

opportunities and provides employment/career counseling. Fourth, and often forgotten, a Venting Mentor, who need not necessarily be in a more experienced position or even from the same professional background for that matter, but may be one's best friend or a close colleague or spouse, who you can talk to, vent your frustrations, and get support and empathy from, and advice when you need it the most. Understanding the value of different types of mentoring will help one identify quality mentoring opportunities.

ACG: How did you get involved with the ACG Mentoring Program?

Dr. Girotra: My first exposure to this unique program was in my second year of fellowship, when I was lucky to be connected with Dr. Carol Burke of the Cleveland Clinic as a mentor. Then during my third year of fellowship, I was mentored by Dr. Douglas Adler, Professor of Medicine/Gastroenterology at the University of Utah.

ACG: What are your impressions of the ACG Mentoring Program?

Dr. Girotra: The College's Mentorship Program is a unique experience for GI fellows-in-training. The program pairs fellows with mentors who can serve as role models, teachers, respected consultants, and career advisors. From my perspective, the years of young physicians' education, training and early career are those of excitement, challenge and anxiety. I found that a mentor offers guidance about career plans and assists with "building bridges." Ultimately, a mentor offers direction necessary to develop and succeed professionally, as well as a human connection to discuss and explore personal aspirations, fears, achievements, and setbacks.

ACG: What are some highlights of working with Dr. Burke?

Dr. Girotra: Dr. Burke was extremely methodical in her approach and reviewed components of my curriculum vitae with me, helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses from an academic standpoint, and provided input as to my short-and medium-term career goals.

While applauding my research endeavors, she encouraged me to identify separate Clinical, Research and Career mentors at my institution. Subsequently, we continued to have scheduled telephone conferences every 3–4 months, to review my academic progress, my evolving career plans, and the satisfaction/challenges during my fellowship.

Dr. Burke also kept me abreast of deadlines for various ACG grant opportunities, especially ones fellows-in-training can apply for, and encouraged me to explore them. She also educated me about the importance of involvement in activities of the College early in my career, and encouraged me to submit my application to serve on various ACG committees. I was later selected to serve on the College's Training Committee, which has been the most fantastic learning experience. Headed by Dr. Seth Richter, the ACG Training Committee spearheads several activities for fellows' education, such as conducting hands-on sessions at the ACG Annual Scientific Meeting, leading the new *ACG Case Reports Journal*, and organizing the ACG Second Year Fellows' Course. Thanks to Dr. Burke's mentorship, I applied and was accepted to serve as one of the Co-Directors for 2016 ACG Second Year Fellows' Course that was held in Washington, DC.

About the ACG Mentoring Program

The ACG Mentoring Program aims to equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to succeed in academic medicine. It also offers opportunities for leadership development, research collaborations and career advice from renowned national experts. Since this program is not traditional face-to-face mentorship, it is important that mentees remain motivated to maintain regular communication and cultivate a relationship with their mentor.

ACG faculty mentors can contribute significantly to the development of their mentees' research, teaching, and clinical skills, particularly with respect to career satisfaction, career management and networking. These relationships foster and guide career growth, nourish skill sets, and give fellows-in-training that extra push they might need as they launch their careers. ACG

LEARN MORE

For information about ACG's Mentoring Program for GI Fellows, visit gi.org/mentoring-program



DR. BURKE SHARES HER PERSPECTIVE AS A MENTOR

“When I reminisce about my undergraduate college, I think about legacy. I maintain a vital link with an undergraduate, graduate or medical school through enduring activities with the institution. As members of the American College of Gastroenterology, we are lucky to be a part of another institution, the ACG, which provides a myriad of opportunities for members to engage in and contribute to the sustainability of the profession and provide legacy. One activity that I have found to be the most personally rewarding is participation as a mentor to gastroenterology fellows in the ACG Mentoring Program.

Throughout the years, I have had a number of mentees in the program, many of whom I now consider friends, catch up with at the ACG Annual Scientific Meeting, and receive emails, calls or cards from years into their established practice and with growing families. The frequency of mentor-mentee contacts and objectives for the mentorship is set by the trainee. I feel my role as the mentor is to assist the budding gastroenterologist to discover their goals and provide advice and counsel, as appropriate.

Sometimes, the discussion is on managing work life balance, types of employment opportunities, the benefits or downsides of additional advanced training, while sometimes it is to share a life experience such as a job offer or birth of a baby. The small gift of time to the mentorship program has redoubled in the reward of watching the mentees' careers flourish and the satisfaction in knowing that I may have played a small part.”

—Carol A. Burke, MD, FACG, ACG President-Elect,
Cleveland Clinic Foundation