



**European Society for Child  
and Adolescent Psychiatry**

## Communications of the European Society for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

**Address for Correspondence related to ESCAP Communications:**

Prof. Dimitris Anagnostopoulos  
Korai 51, Nea Smirni,  
17122 Athens, Greece  
E-Mail: danagnos@otenet.gr

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### **E-mentoring program organized by the Turkish Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Mentorship is defined as a relationship between someone with experience in a certain field or area (“mentor”) and another individual who can gain from that experienced person’s guidance (“mentee”). In this relationship, the mentee can gain important information and skills that will aid them with their professional growth throughout the years. Mentorship is an important component during training period in many areas of medicine, including child and adolescent psychiatry [1]. During residency, physicians-in-training experience extraordinary professional and personal growth, obtain interpersonal and clinical skills that will serve as a foundation for their forthcoming profession, and also form significant interpersonal relationships [2]. The mentor acts both as a coach and a role model, must be willing to share experiences, and must be enthusiastic about the success of mentees. Mentors with those qualities can positively influence mentees’ careers, boost their self-esteem, vocational fulfillment, and research efficiency while providing networking opportunities, fostering independent thoughts, and providing different and novel viewpoints [1, 2]. Mentoring also helps in setting and maintaining boundaries and in planning careers [3] and good examples of mentoring tend to continue across generations of researcher-clinicians [1].

The Turkish Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CAP) was established in 1991 and number of CAPs in Turkey has increased more than twice [<https://cogepder.org.tr> accessed on 15.09.2020] with the assistance of policy makers [4]. The rapid increase in number of

members necessitated standardization of training, education, and mentoring [4]. Within the past 5 years, the association, with the efforts of its president Prof. Dr. Eyüp Sabri Ercan, formed a research academy to allow interaction between mentors and mentees [<https://www.cocukergenkongre.com/>, Accessed on 15.09.2020] and to commemorate one of its deceased senior members, Prof. Dr. Selahattin Senol. This academy focused on research methodology and statistics, however, and the global pandemic prevented its sixth meeting. With the disruption of academic meetings brought on by the Covid19 pandemic, the importance of electronic meetings has increased [5, 6] and the association planned an alternative mentoring program addressing both clinical and research issues. For the past 10 years, there have been significant advances in electronic learning (e-learning), moderating, and mentoring [7]. The Covid19 pandemic has further increased the use of electronic/online educational systems all over the world [8]. E-mentoring was previously defined as a type of electronic/online-mediated interaction between mentors and mentees which may be more egalitarian and user-friendly compared to real-world interactions [9]. Considering the advantages listed above, the association aimed to conduct its mentoring program electronically.

### **E-mentoring program**

The program was organized by the Turkish Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The e-mentorship project was designed and actualized by Eyüp Sabri Ercan who is the president of Turkish Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The main aims of this e-mentorship

program were to bring residents and junior specialists from different Child and Adolescent Psychiatry departments in Turkey together to develop collegial networks, enhance the abilities of junior health care professionals, consult difficult cases, help mentees to obtain their anticipated job outcomes, assist them in reaching their goals, help them to review and understand their own strengths/weaknesses, provide help to those requiring extra development, and most importantly, in these challenging times, to provide moral support.

## Results

Thirty-one mentors that include 14 full professors from Child and Adolescent Psychiatry departments in Turkey, USA, and Brazil voluntarily took part in this program. During this program, 100 small group e-meetings and 16 keynote e-presentations were conducted for a total of 346 mentees. The keynote e-presentations were performed on every Saturday and covered both clinical and research domains. The e-meetings were carried out with small groups on weekdays. One mentor each week held a panel with mentees for at least 1 h, answered questions after the panel, and guided them. The mentors for those panels consisted of volunteers among junior and senior academicians. The program started on June 6 and was conducted as e-mentoring on online platforms during the pandemic process. The percentage of mentee participation in the mentor sessions (71 sessions) was 65.0% until July 11. Most discussed topics in small group meetings included: effects of the Covid19 pandemic on mental health/education, psychopharmacology, case formulations, statistics/methodology, international observership programs, and career planning. Keynote e-presentations covered career planning advices from a senior mentor (Brazil, president of World ADHD), managing CAP inpatient units and research opportunities (USA), Autism Spectrum Disorders, EMDR applications in CAP, Bipolar Disorder, Anxiety Disorders, Sluggish Cognitive Tempo, Family Therapy, Psychopharmacology, Statistics/Methodology, Tips for writing projects/scientific articles, CBT in pediatric OCD, psychiatric emergencies, and Substance Abuse (Turkey).

## Discussion

With this e-mentoring project, which includes the most competent names in their field, mentees were provided with valuable information to develop and progress in their field. One of the most important benefits of this e-mentoring system is to support equal right of education for psychiatrists in anywhere Turkey. Another important result is to

support the mentees to improve their skills and performance by sharing experienced mentors' knowledge and to help protect the mental health of the community. Thus, equality was ensured for all psychiatrists to receive education, online psychological support activities were carried out among colleagues, and it contributed to the increase of professional unity and solidarity during quarantine period. Feedbacks from mentors and mentees were overwhelmingly positive and reflected the importance of preserving peer networks during those trying times. Another important part of the project is that it was completely voluntary.

The advantages of e-mentoring programs, such as the one presented here, should be evaluated within their limitations. Those programs allow participants to overcome geographical distances, and ease access of mentees to mentors, allow flexibility in programming, and may be more cost-effective and egalitarian. However, it may lead to a loss of non-verbal communication cues, may affect rapport, and it is dependent on quality of internet connection. Privacy, confidentiality, and measurement of effects of the program may also be important issues to consider [7–10]. Regardless of limitations, e-mentoring programs may have the potential to ameliorate the effects of the Covid19 pandemic on academic education [5, 6].

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the following quote by Rideout et al. is quite appropriate for this e-mentoring program: “A good mentor encourages the protégé to acquire the ‘tools’ to reach their goals. A good mentor does not ‘feed’ information and answers to the protégé but makes the protégé think and assess.” [11]. We are very thankful to all of our colleagues for sharing their pearls of wisdom with us during this mentorship program and think that further more structured e-mentoring programs preferably involving CAP associations from multiple countries may be planned.

**Acknowledgements** The authors would like to thank all child and adolescent psychiatrist who participate in this project.

**Author contributions** ESE designed and actualized the e-mentorship project. All authors contributed to the writing and approval of this communication.

**Funding** No financial or material support was received for this study.

**Availability of data and materials** Not applicable.

## Compliance with ethical standards

**Conflicts of interest** The authors report no conflict of interest.

**Ethics approval** Ege University Ethics and Research Committee approved this study protocol.

**Consent to publication** Not applicable.

**Corresponding Author:**

Eyüp Sabri Ercan

email: eyercan@hotmail.com

**Authors:**Eyüp Sabri Ercan<sup>1</sup> · Ali Evren Tufan<sup>2</sup> ·Özlem Meryem Kütük<sup>3</sup> · İpek Perçinel Yazıcı<sup>4</sup><sup>1</sup>Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Department, Medical Faculty, Ege University, Izmir, Turkey<sup>2</sup>Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Department, Izzet Baysal State Hospital, Bolu, Turkey<sup>3</sup>Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Department, Medical Faculty, Baskent University, Adana, Turkey<sup>4</sup>Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Department, Medical Faculty, Firat University, Elazığ, Turkey**References**

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