



**Title:** Do we nurture our young? Qualitative conceptual analysis of worst and best mentorship experiences among neonatal advanced practice providers

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**Background:** There is increasing demand for neonatal advanced practice providers (APP) and a shortage of neonatal nurse practitioners (NNP). In many neonatal intensive care units (NICU), neonatal physician assistants (PA) are trained and hired, as well as new graduate NNPs. Neonatal APPs are utilized as mentors in a regional neonatology program in the Pacific Northwest. As part of a longer term goal to develop an educational program for neonatal APP mentors, an initial survey was administered. The purpose of this survey was to raise personal insight and identify themes about 51 neonatal APP mentors' recollections of one's own worst and best mentorship experiences.

**Methods:** The design included a phenomenological, qualitative approach. The participants received an online survey consisting of two questions asking them to describe their worst and best mentorship experiences. The blinded results were analyzed via content analysis by two co-investigators.

**Results:** Consistent themes about worst experiences include "Eat our young", "I am better than you", "Thrown under bus" and "Unwanted". Consistent themes about best experiences include "Validation", "Empowerment", "Positivity", and "Inclusion".

**Conclusion:** Recommendations for successful neonatal APP mentorship based upon the recurrent themes include use of consistent, engaged, trained, and supported mentors, provision of on-time constructive feedback, avoidance of public criticism, private and public praise, focus on the learner, preparation for tasks, and semi-autonomy, with adequate support. Future studies may indicate if supportive neonatal APP mentorship, through the recommended activities, may result in less absenteeism, with better recruitment, retention, and satisfaction. The ultimate goal is to, successfully, nurture our new neonatal APPs during their time of role development. They are our future.