

“There is no teaching without the human factor”

Qualitative research on the student perception in clinical tutoring

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The clinical skills and personal competencies of osteopathy students develop during the university clinical training also through the relationship with the referring tutor. The critical role of the tutor in facilitating student learning is undiscussed, however, there is an incomplete understanding of the attributes, skills, and strategies that make clinical practice successful, particularly in osteopathic education. Research proved that what tutors perceive as effective often differs from students' perceptions of effective teachers; understanding how students learn and develop their professional and personal skills is essential.

This study aims to investigate students' perceptions and beliefs about the possible aspects promoting or hindering their learning process and clinical competencies in an academic clinical training context.

A qualitative research design was used. 24 students of the final year in an osteopathic school were recruited and involved in three focus groups performed using an online platform. Thematic analysis was used for the collection and analysis of the data.

Four relevant themes emerged from the data analysis: the role of the tutor: judge or mentor?; dialogue and discussion; serenity in making mistakes; the tutor as a lookout ship... or lifeboat.

Students agreed that the tutors' kind of attitude plays a key role in their perception of themselves and their professional effectiveness. If tutors relate in a judgmental form and override his or her need for greatness, this leads the student to a loss of confidence in his or her abilities, lowering the performance. Contra, a tutor who can provide professional and personal support, give help according to individual potential, and be willing to carve out a space for dialogue and confrontation, will be perceived by the student himself as a positive figure for his clinical development, professionally and personally.