In medical education, we require students to transition from environment to environment, often with little preparation on what the transition entails. This mirrors what will be expected of them when they enter practice, in a healthcare environment where the only predictable element is constant change. For our learners to be effective future practitioners, they must become Master Adaptive Learners (MAL), able to innovate when faced with practice challenges as opposed to following routines and norms. The MAL concept was first described by Cutrer, et al in 2016 as a metacognitive approach to learning. The MAL model describes a skill set consisting of 4 phases (planning, learning, assessing, and adjusting) powered by curiosity, motivation, mindset, and resilience. In the planning phase, the learner identifies gaps in their knowledge, selects opportunities for learning, searches for resources to address their gaps, and sets goals regarding the desired change magnitude. In the learning phase, students engage in learning through critical appraisal and employ strategies that optimize learning. In the assessing phase, the learner tries out what was learned, using a combination of external feedback and reflection/self-assessment. In the adjusting phase, the learner considers the implications of applying new knowledge at both the individual and system level, translating what was learned into practice. These practices need to be learned in a supportive environment, with coaching and scaffolding. The questions that guide our discussion are 1) What practices on the part of Master Adaptive Teachers can foster the development of MALs? 2) How do we ensure a Maximally Supportive Learning Environment?

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Learning Objectives: At the conclusion of this discussion attendees will be able to:

1. Discuss the individual teaching behaviors that can enhance the development of MALs
2. Describe institutional-level supports for MALs
3. Identify strengths and weaknesses of their learning environment in supporting the Master Adaptive Learner (MAL)
4. Formulate a plan specific to their institution to support MALs

Session Plan:
After a brief introduction to the topic (10 min), participants will engage in small group facilitated discussions concerning
how individual behaviors on the part of faculty, staff, and more advanced learners can support developing MALs. This will be followed by a discussion of the environmental and institutional factors that are likely to be supportive of developing MALs (30 min). The audience will then engage in a strategy discussion that considers their institution’s current strengths and weaknesses for supporting the development of MALs while formulating a plan to improve (25 min). The session will close with a report out of these strategic discussions at each of the tables and a commitment an action plan in participants’ context (10 min). The ideas generated will inform a Perspectives article on this important and timely topic.


Level of Audience: Mid-career

Focus of Presentation: Continuum

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