

# Case study: Expanding the capability of Emergency Department clinicians with coaching skills.



## Overview:

With a paucity of evidence-based solutions available to expand the capability of exhausted clinicians and their teams, augmenting the professional development of highly capable Emergency Department (ED) clinicians in Westmead Hospital, a major teaching hospital based in Western Sydney Local Health District with professional coaching skills and providing coaching to them has proven to be a welcomed and successful investment.

All clinicians believed their coaching skills would be helpful to support others, that coaching gave them a safe place to reflect and feel heard, and all clinicians recommended coaching to other clinicians. Kudos to Dr Kavita Varshney, Deputy Director Emergency Department | Westmead Hospital, for her exemplary leadership under unrelenting complex systemic challenges.

## Context and challenge:

- Many senior staff expressed a desire to support junior medical staff and trainees but felt unequipped / untrained to do so (particularly if the junior expressed some particular difficulties)
- The entire health system has been under strain including senior medical staff (self and colleagues)
- Westmead Hospital ED has an ad hoc mentoring program and was looking for some additional tools for senior staff to use and incorporate into our practices

## Insights:

Two recent JAMA reviews highlight that a critical role for organisations is to provide a safe space for all staff to reflect, learn, and find solutions to their challenges [1], and that professional coaching may be an effective way to reduce emotional exhaustion and overall burnout as well as improve quality of life and resilience for some physicians[2].

## Program goal:

To build ED's medical staff capability and create a coaching culture by providing ED clinicians with foundational professional coaching skills and confidence to support junior medical staff and trainees.

## Method:

21 of the 36 Westmead Hospital's Fellows of Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (FACEM) and four senior nursing staff participated in one of two, one day on-site 'SWITCH – Learning to Ask not Tell®' coaching skills workshops and received one virtual coaching session with an external professional coach. Program outcomes included: learn about and experience how coaching is different from mentoring and other learning interventions, learn about and practice coaching skills and the coaching process, and review ways to apply coaching in the workplace.

[1] Shanafelt T, Ripp J, Trockel M. [Understanding and Addressing Sources of Anxiety Among Health Care Professionals During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). JAMA. 2020.

[1] Dyrbye L, Shanafelt T, Gill P, Satele D, West C. [Effect of a Professional Coaching Intervention on the Well-being and Distress of Physicians: A Pilot Randomized Clinical Trial](#). JAMA 2019

## Workshop results:

Key findings from survey respondents (n= 22/29 participants)	Agreed or strongly agreed Pre-program	Agreed or strongly agreed Post-program
I understand how coaching is different to mentoring	32%	100%
Coaching is helpful for high functioning clinicians	86%	95%
I have good coaching knowledge and skills to support others	9%	91%
I feel committed to practicing my coaching skills in daily conversations		95%
I would recommend the program to other clinicians as useful professional development		95%

## Coaching session results:

Post-coaching responses	Agreed or strongly agreed
My coach created a safe space to reflect and feel listened to	100%
I would recommend coaching to colleagues.	100%



## Coaching session feedback:

- "Excellent learning experience"
- "Better and more useful than I expected, I came out with a real goal and plan for something that I didn't realize I had a solution for"
- "I found the coaching session run by Tania to be a really enjoyable & thought provoking experience. Tania was a great active listener who was able to present me with challenging questions to work through. I felt safe during the session and was motivated to take the next steps towards my professional goals by the session's conclusion. Thanks Tania"
- "Very helpful, benefited by being coached and also by having insight on how to coach and ask the questions"
- "Interesting experience, enjoyed the time, unsure if it's right for me- might be more applicable when I'm a bit further along in my career"
- "Dave helped create a vision and see clarity regarding steps to take."
- "It's really helpful to help me get clearer direction on a trailblazing adventure"
- "Very useful. I'd like to pursue some further exposure/practice with coaching."
- "Great session"
- "Time to pause, reflect and plan"
- "Good first-time experience"
- "Very positive, leads to actual solutions and actions"
- "Sancha was excellent and I would highly recommend"

For more information please contact Dr Kavita Varshney, Deputy Director Emergency Department | Westmead Hospital | WSLHD at [Kavita.Varshney@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Kavita.Varshney@health.nsw.gov.au)

For more information about 'SWITCH – Learning to Ask not Tell®' coaching skills development or professional coaching for clinicians, please contact [Rita Holland](#), Director and Professional Certified Coach (ICF) | Capstan Partners.

If you'd like to have an obligation-free discussion about expanding the leadership capabilities and psychological wellbeing of your team or departments then please get in touch.

Email [info@capstan.com.au](mailto:info@capstan.com.au) or call [0413 599 009](tel:0413599009).