

In talking about the feedback sandwich analogy, I used an Atkins Diet analogy, remarking how I tend to skip the bun now more than I used to. The confusion may have been in equating "positive" feedback comments with the bun and "negative" feedback with the meat in the middle. That was not what I had intended to convey.

My analogy was the bun represents those 'soft comments' about how the person is doing that contain no substance about the learner's clinical skills. These are the fluffy comments we often use about how the person is a pleasure to work with, has a good attitude, and gets along with members of the staff. While they may be true and do fall into the Professionalism competency, they can be interpreted by the learner as inferred comments about clinical ability. Adults often hear what they want to hear and these nice comments can overshadow what needs to get said.

The meat represents those comments about specific clinical skills and includes BOTH positive, reinforcing ones and corrective ones. I try hard to make a clear distinction between the nice person comments and specific observations about a student's history taking, physical exam techniques, clinical reasoning and decision-making, interpersonal interactions, etc. Hence, separating the bun from the meat.

Written, end of clerkship comments from evaluators too often include, "a pleasure to work with", "loved by all the staff", and "will make a great doctor" without enough comments about clinical skills. Nice bun, but (as the BK line went) where's the beef?

Hope this helps!

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