

International Team Time: The Moorfield's Experience

After a presentation about the positive impact of Schwartz rounds for staff at Moorfields Eye Hospital, to the World Association of Eye Hospitals (WAEH), an international organization with 58 member eye hospitals, we were asked to organize an international round for all the member hospitals, so they could have an immersive experience of the Schwartz Round itself.

As a team, we are passionate about broadening our remit and have seen the powerful impact they have had for our own staff, so we gladly accepted the invitation. We always choose song titles for our rounds, as they often evoke emotion and connection. The title for this Team Time was "Lean on me" and the theme was 'Connecting through Covid-19'.

We started our round with some breathing exercises and a butterfly hug, to enable people to disconnect from their work and transition into our Team Time.

We had 3 panelists: 2 from London and 1 from the United States. Each shared how Covid had affected them. Our audience were from the UK, USA, India, Indonesia, Australia and Netherlands. Panelist 1 talked about his frustration at the lack of protective equipment at the start of the pandemic and then being struck with Covid, soon after starting a new role. Panelist 2 talked about how she was in charge of an entire surgical department and the weight of the decisions she had to take, including staff redeployment and redundancy at the start of the pandemic, as well as finding a way to acknowledge staff emotions. Panelist 3 spoke of his partner being affected by Covid and the anxiety and worry they both experienced, which continued even after his partner had got better.

As a team, we didn't know how our round would be received, especially as most people in the audience had not experienced a Schwartz Round, let alone a Team Time before. We really weren't prepared for what happened next. It was an emotive experience, seeing the audience connecting to the panelists stories and sharing their own helplessness, grief, isolation and guilt, but also beautiful stories of support, selflessness and kindness. We were struck by the domino effect the stories had on the audience, many of whom had never shared their stories with anyone previously. It was clear that Covid-19 had impacted everyone in the audience in one way or another and the panelists stories resonated with them. One of the hardest things about the Team Time was seeing people weeping and not being able to hug them. What we all came away with though, was that our experiences all over the world were kindred and the Team Time created an overwhelming feeling of connectedness to one another. Here are some feedback quotes from the Team Time; "I felt that I reflected well and it gave me insights into my own feelings and emotions." "I have felt isolated during the year from friends and work mates due to changes in work. I don't feel so isolated anymore after today." "Getting closer to finally sharing my story, which I am just not able to tell yet."

We have since been asked to organize regular Team Times for the WAEH. Below is a live drawing that took place during the round, that captures the stories and the feelings evoked from our International Team Time.



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