

Developing a culture of self-care and appreciation of others right from the start: How we brought Schwartz to multi-disciplinary students at the University of Hertfordshire

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"Probably the most important thing we do to support our staff" is the way Schwartz Rounds at West Herts were described on an evaluation form. Three years into running Schwartz Rounds, they are well embedded into the organisation, well attended and recognised by colleagues throughout the Trust as being a key part of promoting and maintaining staff wellbeing.

We consistently have good attendance and excellent feedback from our student nurses, several of whom have been panellists. Our Round entitled "When I Made a Difference" saw a student nurse sharing a story about coming to terms with her professional identity and the pride she felt in knowing she had successfully advocated for her patient. Other students shared stories about how it feels to be part of a multidisciplinary team, about that shared sense of purpose that exists only in the moments of a team all pulling in

the same direction, centred on a patient.

Building on this firm foundation, what if we could bring the magic of Schwartz to a wider student audience? What if they could be Schwartz converts before they even qualified? What if they really understood and found ways to cope with the emotional demands of their chosen vocations right from the start?

And so, an idea was born. Using our strong relationships with lecturers at the University of Hertfordshire, we worked together to integrate Rounds into the Interprofessional Learning module which sees students of nursing, paramedic science, physiotherapy, dietetics, occupational therapy and more all coming together for a week designed to strengthen multidisciplinary collaboration and understanding.

What we hadn't initially bargained

for was that this would entail two Rounds, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, each for over 350 students! Would the mod-

"It was eye opening and emotional. But it was fantastic."

el scale up that far? Would they know what to do? Was this too great a risk?

We stick to the recipe. Eight volunteers over two Rounds to tell the story of the patient they will never forget. Preparation is key: some of them have never attended a Round. Looking out at the audience on the day, I feel a rush of emotion. The two of us are responsible for hundreds of people. What if no-one says a word? The silence of hundreds of people could be pretty deafening.

"Thank you for helping me to put care into perspective."

We hear stories from students coming to terms with their professional identities, learning to work within the system, railing against inequality, putting their patients first and developing an awareness of the emotional cost associ-

"A truly powerful and meaningful way of recognising and reflecting upon the emotional burdens we take on every day with our patients."

ated with this path in life. One panellist describes the emotional bond formed with a stroke survivor and the jubilation as he takes his first steps after months of rehab. Another describes the personal cost of work mirroring home life.

And then, in response to a panelist's story, one student tells us about her brother being shot in Africa, how he died on a trolley in a corridor. Now the risk of hundreds of people is clear. How to say something that adequately addresses the enormity of what she has shared in the company of such numbers? As ever, this is the power of Schwartz, the privilege of being a facilitator. It is the feeling of a personal conversation between two people while maintain-

ing a connection with the whole audience. The care and compassion in the room takes over. The group rally and show her the care she needs, working together.

We hear more stories, see light-bulb moments as those from different disciplines recognise similar challenges, echoed emotions, a shared sense of purpose. The power of Schwartz is evident even in this large group, even with so many new to the format.

So, did it work? Have we set them on the path to be a group of health professionals who are more able to care for themselves and others, and as a result more able to provide compassionate care for their patients?

Collecting and analysing that number of evaluation forms was going to take a bit of doing! They say necessity is the mother of invention and this is how we ended up with two innovations for the price of one. With a bit of IT wizardry, the standard evaluation form was made into an electronic version. Certainly a relief for our administrator who wasn't looking forward to inputting all that data!

Evaluation of the Rounds demonstrates that they were attended by a wide range of disciplines, the overwhelming majority of whom believe that they have gained greater insight into their own and others' feelings about the work we do.

“Schwartz Rounds provide a professional bonding platform.”

The online feedback form and results:

← Schwartz Round Feedback Form ■ ☆

QUESTIONS RESPONSES 151 SEND

The stories presented by the panel were relevant to my daily work *

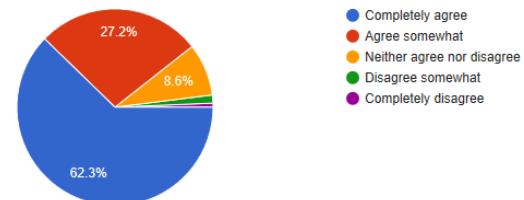
Completely agree
 Agree somewhat
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Disagree somewhat
 Completely disagree

I gained insights that will help me to meet the needs of patients

Multiple choice
 Completely agree
 Agree somewhat
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Disagree somewhat
 Completely disagree

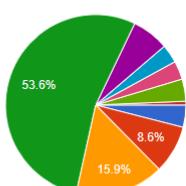
I have a better understanding of how I feel about my work

151 responses



What is your professional affiliation?

151 responses



I have a better understanding of how my colleagues feel about their work

151 responses

