



Schwartz Awards Entry 2020

Category: Most Powerful Round

Organisation: Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Schwartz at Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (HPFT):

Since 2015 Schwartz Rounds have been a regular offer to all staff at HPFT, offering a place for exploration and reflection on the emotional impacts of working in a mental health NHS Trust. As an organisation we have over sixty sites, spanning four counties and over three thousand staff.

Feedback for Schwartz rounds has been incredibly positive and forms a key part of our Staff Health and Wellbeing Strategy. More recently we have moved to a more strategic model of Schwartz which includes collaborating with teams and other groups across the Trust to develop new opportunities for offering rounds to increasingly wider audiences. One example of these new collaborations was the offer of two rounds at our recent Race Equality Day, in partnership with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team and our BAME Staff Network (these two rounds were set-up as break-out options and were as such set up as Schwartz convention suggests).

Race Equality Day 18th October 2019

About Race Equality Day:

Race Equality Day is celebrated annually on the 18th October at HPFT and this year the theme was 'Action not words'. The day provides an opportunity for all staff to come together, learn about the work currently taking place to support equality, diversity and inclusion at HPFT and celebrate the wide range of cultural backgrounds of our staff.

Schwartz Rounds:

Two Schwartz rounds were held as part of Race Equality Day 2019; 'Let's talk about it' and 'Courageous Conversations'. The rounds were facilitated by our clinical leads (Andrew Nicholls and Rakesh Magon) and the panel members volunteered on the day.

Facilitator Reflections:

- **Why was this round so powerful?**

Racism is a particularly destructive and repulsive form of prejudice which is somehow still a part of too many people's lives at home and at work. One of the most unacceptable ways in which this can be experienced is from the very people you are trying to care for – to maintain one's compassion for another human being, needful of help, whilst being abused by them is both miraculous but of course more often, unachievable. This kind of attack upon oneself is a direct assault upon one's compassion.

Of course people at work also experience racism from their colleagues, perhaps even more pernicious an assault upon our capacity to care. Sometimes this is relatively unconscious, sometimes terribly explicit. Often it is the implicit existence of this kind of prejudice which is the most harmful – the idea that racism exists in the fabric of the everyday weft and wain of ordinary human processes.

In these two Schwartz Rounds in our Race Equality Day, the implicit became explicit in a tremendously powerful and ultimately valuable way.

- **What was your experience?**

Certain themes in Rounds tend to generate certain anticipatory feelings for the facilitators and of course for the panel and attendees. On this occasion the feelings were of a fairly present anxiety at where this topic might take us, and how provocative the discussions might be. Might this be explosive / determinedly silent / might people walk out in angry tears?

There were two Rounds, the first, with a panel of three, attracted ten people, the second over thirty and whilst both were pretty remarkable experiences it was the second that has stayed in the mind. The panel were from BAME communities and most (about 80%) of the attendees as well. As facilitators, one of us is Asian the other White. The panel members spoke in an extraordinarily open way about their experience of being subject to racism, their offer to the audience was indeed of a 'Courageous Conversation'. This really helped to set the tone for the second part and what followed was a humbling and emotional discussion which brought people in the room together – it could have been very different but perhaps our organisations' values are by now so embedded in the workforce that people instinctively trust in each other and the process.

- **Why was it different to other rounds?**

We had never explicitly tackled this subject before, and in doing so we felt we were somewhat out of our comfort zones. Rounds are meant to be open, candid and can be emotional of course, but this theme, in that context, drew immediately personal, courageous and emotive conversations into the room. All of this had the potential to set-up a kind of split in the room between the BAME and white participants, and this was perhaps the most obvious anticipatory anxiety, but this didn't happen. Instead, white colleagues were able to express their own feelings about what they were hearing in a way which drew the group together.

After the Round, and over the next few days, several colleagues who had been in in the Round approached us to offer feedback about their experience and the common theme was both disbelief at learning of the presence of discrimination and a willingness to see and hear it from now on, and a deep sense of having been a part of something mutative.

As a consequence of the feedback which was collected we intend to put on several more Rounds on the subject of racial discrimination as part of our calendar of Schwartz events in the Trust. There is a real feeling amongst the colleagues who experienced the Rounds that this may be an important part of our journey towards overcoming Racism in our organisation.

Participant Feedback:

'I was completely terrified at the seeming prolifity of discrimination reported by people at the rounds. I didn't know the scale was so massive.'

'Very easy to talk about racial inequalities'

'Very good session, people were able to speak passionately about race issues'

'Useful to know that others are in the same boat – sad to hear some of the stories. Feels like progress is very slow'

'Excellent, humbling, challenging, upsetting'

'Very helpful and equipped me to have courageous conversations'

'Made me ashamed to be white'

'The topics discussed were very interesting. Hopefully management will facilitate change for the better'

'Really useful to have an open discussion about racism and how it affects us as black staff at HPFT'