

The Point of Care Foundation and Health Education England working across the North West: collaboration to deliver Schwartz Rounds

In 2013 Health Education England working across the North West identified Schwartz Rounds as an evidence-based intervention that can reduce staff stress, build team cohesion, and improve the capacity of staff to treat patients with empathy and compassion.

What are Schwartz Rounds?

Schwartz Rounds provide a structured forum where all staff, clinical and non-clinical, come together regularly to discuss the emotional and social aspects of working in healthcare.

The purpose of Rounds is to understand the challenges and rewards that are intrinsic to providing care, not to solve problems or to focus on the clinical aspects of patient care.

Rounds can help staff feel more supported in their jobs, providing them with a boundaried time and space to reflect on their roles – something which is not otherwise easy to find in busy, complex, healthcare settings. Evidence shows that staff who attend Rounds feel less stressed and isolated, with increased insight and appreciation for each other's roles. They also help to reduce hierarchies between staff and to focus attention on interactions and communications both within staff teams and between staff and patients.

The underlying premise for Rounds is that the compassion shown by staff can make all the difference to a patient's experience of care, but that in order to provide compassionate care staff must, in turn, feel supported in their work.

The Point of Care Foundation is the sole licensed provider of Rounds in the UK; their role is to train facilitators in the methodology and to provide access to an experienced mentor, who will guide the facilitators through the process of setting up and implementing the Rounds.

How has the partnership contributed to creating more supportive organisational cultures?

Health Education England working across the North West has provided financial assistance for seven organisations in their area to implement Schwartz Rounds across a diverse range of settings including acute, mental health and community trusts.

More recently, support has been extended to Liverpool University to run Rounds for a variety of professional trainees (medics, nurses, psychotherapists). The intention of implementing Rounds in an education setting is to encourage open communication between professional groups, so that it becomes the norm early on in the careers of healthcare staff. Rounds also provide a unique opportunity for trainees to reflect on working in healthcare, without any emphasis on assessment or direct learning objectives.

Funding has been provided for additional facilitators to be trained, which is an important factor in ensuring that Schwartz Rounds are sustained. The Point of Care Foundation are also developing a

model ('Schwartz In-House') that will allow Health Education England working across the North West to train future facilitators internally.

The work in the North West is now overseen by the [Psychology Professions Network](#), which provides a central hub for bringing the Schwartz community together to develop skills and help assess needs.

"The resources and assistance from the Point of Care were invaluable in beginning a path to promote and provide financial assistance to grow the Rounds within our NHS trusts. We are very proud to have organisations in our region signed up to deliver Rounds."

'Why run Rounds?' – thoughts from a Round facilitator in North West:

"I am involved in running Rounds because I think that we are very poor at recognising the emotional cost of care giving. Staff don't necessarily have that safe place to take things to. To talk about this thing that has upset me or frightened me or moved me. Schwartz Rounds really fit with that model."

Feedback and evaluation

After attending Rounds staff are encouraged to complete evaluation forms. Between 2013-15 The Point of Care Foundation collected feedback from over 10,000 respondents, with 87% agreeing 'somewhat' or 'completely' that the Rounds would help them to work better with colleagues and 83% that the Rounds provided knowledge that would help them to care for patients. 75% completely agreed and 19% 'somewhat agreed' that they would attend Rounds again.

'Good to have a discussion about the emotional issues our work raises, and nice to attend an event that avoided action plans and bullet points!'

"One of the 'unintended consequences' of this is that people from the different teams/sectors begin to recognise each other's faces. Rounds create the opportunities to bring teams together".

'Overarching and inclusive approach to the human impact of caring that has resonance across the caring professions.'

'A positive way of promoting compassionate understanding within our organisation.'

Conclusion

The partnership has been successful for both organisations and continues to develop. We have been able to take Rounds beyond the acute setting where they have traditionally been implemented into community and mental health services as well as education.

Health Education England, working across the North West, have supported the workforce by providing access to an innovative and evidence-based programme. Staff who attend Rounds also feel more connected to colleagues across their organisation, which is particularly crucial in community and mental health settings where the workforce is spread and potentially remote.

We look forward to continuing this partnership in 2016 and beyond.