

Schwartz Rounds Topics

Here is a list of Schwartz Rounds topics taken from real Rounds as well as ideas generated by the Schwartz Community. This should help you to plan your Rounds in advance or simply stimulate your thinking around potential topics.

You should aim to give your Rounds a broad title that will encourage attendance from all staff groups, but also enough detail to attract interest and curiosity. For example:

- *"Hindsight is a wonderful thing: when things don't go as planned"*
- *"I'm human too: when feelings surface"*

Your panel may wish to help you choose the topic for the Round.

Remember, when you first start out, pick simple cases, confident speakers and non-contentious topics. This will help your facilitators to grow in confidence and establish a safe and comfortable forum for participants to speak.

Consider alternating between case and theme-based topics, and remember to also include those with positive and uplifting themes!

Key points

- Avoid topics which are "live"
- Be wary of personal or organisational agendas
- Be wary of personal or political grievance
- Schwartz rounds should not replace a formal debrief or support mechanisms
- Consider having a "back up Round" as a contingency

General topics

- A patient I'll never forget
- A colleague I'll never forget
- A patient I'd rather forget
- An experience I'll never forget
- Under the spotlight
- In at the deep end
- An unexpected turn of events
- Caught in the middle
- The day I made a difference
- You see a lot in this job
- The day I nearly walked out
- It's not easy being green: new jobs, teams, roles, organisations
- Hind sight is a wonderful thing....
- Can you see the real me? Professional stereotypes
- Whose job is it anyway? Professional boundaries
- Compassion on the table in theatre
- Close calls – when seconds count
- From Holby City to ER – when TV medicine affects patient expectations
- Homeless for the holidays
- Hope and miracles
- When the direction of care suddenly changes
- Intimidation in the workplace
- Putting compassion to the test
- Rules and regulations: help or hindrance?
- Tales of the unexpected
- The challenges of being an award winning hospital
- The legendary patient: memorable patients and their legacies
- Treating patients “who are not in the book”
- Lost in translation
- When new life and the threat of death are intertwined
- When the patient is not what you’ve been told
- Witnessing poor care
- Who is in charge?
- Surviving the inspection

Abuse & safeguarding

- Impact and consequence of reporting child abuse
- Have we done all we can? Discharge to a high risk environment
- When the patient is the abuser
- Maintaining compassionate care in the face of abuse
- Scary/threatening patients

Ourselves as Caregivers

- A part or apart? Feelings of isolation at work
- Too close to home: when personal and professional lives collide
- Caring at home and at work– the juggling act
- “No win” situations
- Feeling unsafe
- Feeling disgusted
- Feelings of helplessness
- Feelings of rejection
- Feelings of failure when things don’t work
- When patients transfer their care- how does it feel
- Keeping our promises to patients
- Maintaining hope
- Missing the chance to say goodbye
- Saying goodbye
- The cumulative effect of multiple deaths
- When we cannot fix it
- When you don’t want to go in the room
- When you don’t know what to say
- When a patient exhausts you and all you have to offer
- When a patient response to treatments is less than you hoped for
- When a Junior Doctor's patient dies
- Whose patient is it anyway?
- I'm human too: emotional and physical vulnerability in frontline staff
- Compassion fatigue/burnout
- Anger in our patients and ourselves
- Self-doubt

Colleagues as patients

- Compassionate care for colleagues in trouble
- When the patient is a colleague
- The unexpected death of a colleague
- The view from the other side of the bed
- When the doctor has cancer

Caregiver-patient relationships

- The frequently hospitalised patient
- Length of stay and the patient/caregiver relationship
- Compassionate patient-caregiver relationship
- Professional boundaries (can we be friends?)
- Maintaining professionalism
- Straining the caregiver/patient relationship
- A very private patient (hard to reach)

Communication

- When communication breaks down: patients/ carers/colleagues/ teams/ managers/ unions /the health care community etc
- Friction at the interface of... physician, nurse and administrator
- A student's perspective – from the ivory tower to the street
- The incarcerated patient
- Choices no patient should have to make
- A chronically lonely patient
- Diagnosis denial
- Making the call: delivering bad news
- Delivering sensitive information
- Encouraging patient autonomy
- How patients are heard
- Caring for patients who cannot respond verbally
- I know something you don't know
- I've got good news and you don't want to know
- It's not about the left breast, it's about the person too
- Private matter...public debate
- Responding to patient complaints
- The diamond in the rough
- Treatment decisions – caught in the middle
- Unusual patient requests
- When communication isn't optimal
- When you can't hear the patient and the patient can't hear you

DNR – Do Not Resuscitate

- Discussing DNR options with patients and families
- The emotional impact of unsuccessful resuscitation
- Revoking DNR – conflicts with family, patient and caregiver
- When advance directives fail

End of life

- Is there such a thing as a good death?
- Emotional/financial burden at end of life
- Futile or heroic treatment – diverse perspectives
- High cost care at the end of life
- Nutritional support dilemmas at end of life
- Palliative sedation
- Our roles as caregivers for dying patients
- Timely hospice referrals
- When death is not the end
- When does the mourning begin?
- Initiating life support
- Is the patient terminal?

- "Am I wrong to keep her at home?"
- Caregivers' role in death with dignity
- When is it time to stop?
- When provider and patient values conflict: comfort care/ death with dignity vs. fighting to the end

Children

- Facing the death of a child
- Good deaths for children
- Infant death — its impact on parents
- The unexpected loss of a child

Young people

- Young terminally ill patients
- Life and death issues with pregnant patients
- Too young to die

Communication challenges

- Communication challenges dealing with terminal illness
- Creative and compassionate conversations at death
- Conversations with families facing end of life issues
- Listening not hearing – end of life
- Helping a patient and family transition from aggressive to comfort care

Challenging circumstances

- Conflict of interest and secondary gain in end of life decisions
- Death during the holidays
- Responding to a catastrophically ill patient
- The patient who is determined to die
- When a parent of a young child is dying
- When the dying patient is your parent
- When the patient's last wish cannot be honoured

Mistakes

- Apologising to patients
- Being responsible for a medical/ clinical error
- Managing disclosure of an adverse medical event
- Medically induced trauma
- When a patient comes to you misdiagnosed
- When an error occurs despite our best efforts
- When the system fails the patient

Family

- Caring for the ill-prepared patient/family
- Dealing with angry families
- Families dealing with trauma
- Families in crisis
- Families micro-managing medical care
- Family presence during a resuscitation
- Family refuses treatment when you believe patient can recover
- The divided family
- The hypervigilant family
- When family & professionals disagree
- When illness strikes your family
- When parental rights conflict with responsible health care
- When parents need as much or more
- When patients and family request non-beneficial care

Major incidents

- Responding to the crisis
- Rallying together
- Home vs work; chaos everywhere!
- Stranded!
- When it couldn't get any worse

Organ donations

- Mismatched donor transplants
- Organ procurement – ethical dilemmas
- The lost transplant
- When your patient is an organ donor

Pain

- A patient's request for controlled substances
- I can't feel your pain
- The chronic pain patient – caring in the face of scepticism
- Unrelieved suffering
- Whose pain is it anyway? Understanding the caregiver, patient, and family's interpretation of pain

Patients who are challenging

- Accepting a patient's decisions when you don't think they're right
- Biting, swearing, screaming, and hitting
- Patient non-compliance
- "It's all in his head"
- Time management challenges with needy patients
- Manipulative patients
- Patients who don't want to leave

- Patients with resources in the community who refuse to use them
- The erosion of empathy in the care of a demanding patient
- The interminable patient
- When patient choices don't make sense
- When patients won't choose
- When the patient is his own worst enemy
- Who knows best? Self-directed care
- When the patient has given up

Paediatrics

- Adolescent health: when law conflicts with good judgment
- Children's behavioural health – when the team meets the system
- Children with complex needs
- Transition from paediatric to adult care
- Birth and death of a newborn
- Who is responsible for this child? Working with looked after children.
- Working through multiple psycho/social factors in treating a child psychiatric inpatient

Positivity

- A time I felt proud
- Unsung heroes
- Why I come to work
- They were so grateful.
- They still keep in touch
- The best thing that ever happened
- Extra miles we have walked
- Unintended consequences
- Belonging to "team awesome"
- Season of hope
- When care clicks into place
- Focus in the midst of chaos

Substance abuse

- Dilemmas and compassion in patients with substance abuse problems

Suicide/self-harm

- Adolescent overdose – I really didn't mean it
- Caring for the patient who practices self-harm
- Suicide of a patient under our care
- The chronically suicidal patient

Technology

- When the internet helps and hinders patient care

- Filming consultations – when a patient pulls out their mobile phone

Time management & pressures

- When your best doesn't feel good enough
- Advocating for the patient in a fast paced environment
- Are we too busy?
- Balancing expediency and sensitivity
- Economic pressures and morale
- I'm late, I'm late for a very important date
- When we just can't stand by
- "Next please" putting on a brave face with rapid turnover of patients
- When change is constant
- Two places at once