

## **Schwartz community conference London summary 27 October 2016**

Our London Schwartz community conference on 27 October 2016 proved to be a very successful day, stimulating interesting discussions and providing an opportunity for shared learning amongst the 130 plus delegates who attended. It seemed an enjoyable and beneficial day for all; the energy and drive of delegates was tangible as they keenly discussed how Schwartz Rounds continue to support staff by providing a safe space for reflection.

As delegates arrived for the day, Jocelyn Cornwell, chief executive of The Point of Care Foundation, welcomed them and expressed her hopes that the day would provide 'room to breathe' for all. Aware that time is precious amongst healthcare staff, we hoped that the day would give an opportunity for staff to feel refreshed and re-energised, allowing community members to share learning and motivate one another to keep Schwartz Rounds and their values alive.

A key theme to emerge on the day was self-care and how important this is in facilitating staff resilience. Lisa Rodrigues, a mental health campaigner, shared her experiences of working in leadership in the NHS. She reminded us that in high-pressured roles, it is important to be kind to yourself, to afford yourself rest, and to always remember that criticism is opinion. An interesting discussion emerged from the audience about the myth of the 'heroic leader' and how we need to accept imperfection as a human reality, especially in the high-pressure environment of the health service.

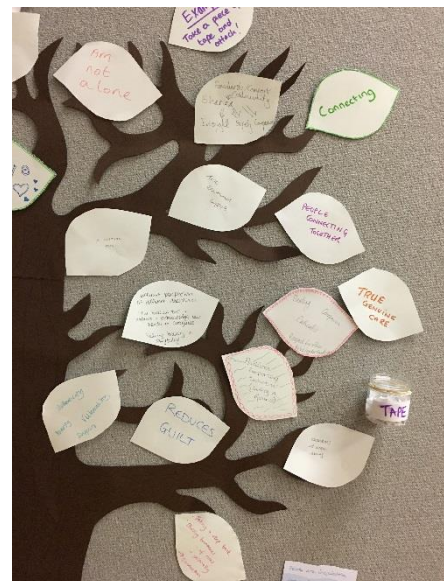
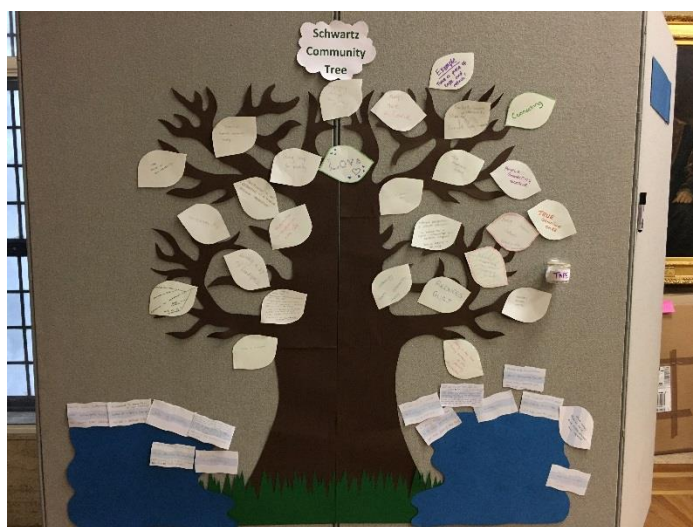
Professor Gail Kinman's talk reinforced this prioritisation of self-care: it is not an indulgence but is essential for resilience. Gail reminded us that to feel stressed or burdened with work-related emotions is normal, and it is essential that we deconstruct the stigmatised belief that to express these is to be 'unprofessional'. We need to train staff with an 'emotional curriculum', reassuring them of the validity of their emotions and the right to reflect upon them. Both Lisa and Gail's talks were a sharp reminder of the necessity of Schwartz Rounds: not only do they provide a space for emotional self-care and reflection, but they are enacting a cultural change which states that stress and occupational-induced emotions are normal, valid and as central to the nature of healthcare work as clinical concerns.

It was this powerful reminder that led to many interesting discussions about just how important the Rounds have become, why they need to be sustained, and how this can be achieved. A talk from Dr. Mary Leamy from King's College London discussed the origins of Schwartz Centre Rounds in the US, reminding us of their original purpose and goals. This led to interesting comparisons between the US and UK Schwartz Rounds models, stimulating discussions about the evolution of Rounds and whether the model can be adapted to suit needs. Delegates offered interesting comments on whether or not film could be used: would this take away the human aspect of the stories? Would it lead to a lack of engagement? Or would film be a way of ensuring that Rounds were not cancelled last minute? Is visual film not still a great way of capturing human emotion?

In the afternoon, this discussion continued when Matt Loveridge gave a presentation in our 'Learn, borrow, steal' session, an opportunity for shortlisted entries from our 'Schwartz Awards' to present their work. Matt gave a presentation on how videoconferencing has been used at St Christopher's to enable Rounds to happen across sites, allowing staff from one site to still see the Round from the other without having to worry about travel time, with Matt describing it as an 'innovation through desperation'. Similarly, Farhana Nargis gave a presentation on how 'pop-up Rounds' were invented at Ashford and St Peter's to enable ward staff who could not find the time to attend a Round to still have access to this reflective space. 'Pop-up Rounds' are thirty-minutes long instead of an hour. Whilst some audience members expressed concern that this would detract membership from the traditional, hour-long Rounds, Farhana reassured us that they were an extra which actually boosted membership, and not a replacement.

One final theme to emerge was the power of storytelling. World-class performance storyteller Ben Haggarty had the audience moving from laughter to silence as they were gripped by his tale, reminding us of the power a 'good story' can have over an audience's emotions. Becky Platt's presentation of West Herts' 'most powerful Round' entry – 'Where were you when she needed you?' – later that afternoon then brought home how the power of storytelling is central to the power of Rounds. Stories take both the teller and the listener on an emotional journey, allowing them to cathartically process what otherwise remains repressed and unmanaged. In this sense, stories enact a cultural change where emotions become central and valid.

This balanced relationship between teller and listener is perhaps a fitting analogy for the day as a whole. Moments of silent and attentive engagement as delegates listened to the speakers were balanced with moments of intense discussion where they became the tellers themselves, sharing ideas and telling their own stories. By the end of the day, the Schwartz community tree and pond blossomed with leaves and ripples as delegates shared what they loved about Rounds and the impact that they have had.



The afternoon closed with the presentation of our first ever 'Schwartz Awards'. Thirty submissions had been on display throughout the day, exhibiting the effort the Community

had gone to in order to demonstrate how Rounds had positively impacted their organisation in various ways. Winners for both the South and the North will be announced after our Manchester conference on 24 November.

Overall, the day provided not only 'room to breathe', but also room to share learning, to innovate and to reinvigorate Schwartz Rounds. The feedback reflected this success, with 89% of attendees rating the day as either good or excellent. The discussions that took place on Twitter (#Schwartzconf2016) highlighted the energy that was in the room:

- [@BeckyPlatt3](#): "Fantastic conference. Thank you! Left buzzing with ideas"
- [@yusuf\\_yousuf](#): "Feel reenergised with ideas/hope to sustain the rounds"
- [@EducatingRini](#): "a fab breathing space"

Delegates were so engaged from start to finish, and the day served as a poignant reminder of how valued Rounds are, as well as how hard the community is working to ensure their sustainability.

It's fair to say that both attendees and staff here at The Point of Care Foundation left feeling not only that we had nurtured the Community by creating a space to come together and share stories, but also feeling inspired as to what we can continue to do to support the Schwartz community in the future.

We look forward to the Manchester conference on 24 November.

Resources for the day can be accessed by clicking the following links:

- Professor Gail Kinman's [slides](#)
- Farhana Nargis' [slides](#)
  - Ashford and St Peter's innovation [video](#)
- Matt Loveridge's [slides](#)
- A storify of the day's tweets can be accessed [here](#)
- A dropbox of photos from the day can be found [here](#).