



## **Schwartz community conference Manchester summary 24 November 2016**

Our Manchester Schwartz community conference on 24 November 2016 proved to be an educational and inspiring day for the 75 plus delegates that attended. The day not only provided an opportunity to broaden knowledge and expertise on Schwartz Rounds, but also allowed delegates to enter a creative space, to think 'outside the box' and consider innovative ways of developing Schwartz Rounds and sustaining the cultural change that they enact.

As the world's first industrialised city, Manchester has thrived off innovation and design. Indeed, our conference was hosted at the Museum of Science and Industry, and this seemed a fitting venue for a day which was to centre around one very key issue: the need for innovation and cultural change in healthcare. As the day progressed, it became ever clearer that this is the mission at the heart of Schwartz Rounds; they are part of a wider movement which acknowledges not only the emotional labour involved in working in healthcare, but the need to change a system which fails to acknowledge emotion as valid and valuable.

This need for change was clear right from the offset, with Professor Jamie Hacker Hughes beginning with a talk on psychological wellbeing for staff in the frontline. Jamie pointed out the crucial paradox that exists: staff want to provide high-quality, compassionate care but find themselves faced with an environment which is uncaring. As Jamie reminded us, burnout is experienced by staff who work in human services on the frontline, and in order to support these staff it is important that we 'reset the balance', allowing them to speak freely about the emotional stresses they encounter. Schwartz Rounds enact the necessary change whereby supporting staff begins to be routine practice.

This theme of change continued throughout the day, with Professor Liz Stokoe's presentation 'Change narratives...change outcomes' highlighting how the way in which we communicate can drastically alter the outcomes that we achieve. Liz gave a very relevant example: it was found that when GP patients who were going to their appointment with more than one concern were asked 'Is there anything else?' by their doctor, only 50% were being honest and responding 'yes'. However, when the question was changed to 'Is there *something* else?', 90% then said 'yes'. The language changed, and so did the outcome.

Yet Liz's talk on conversation and communication was relevant to more than just staff/patient interactions. She provided important insights, stimulating ideas for how we can better encourage people to participate in Schwartz Rounds and open up about their own experiences and emotions. If we are going to enact the cultural change in which emotions are freely admitted, then perhaps we should be asking whether people have '*something*' to share. Liz demonstrated how the smallest changes can make a huge difference, reminding us that cultural change *is* possible. 98% of delegates rated Liz's talk as either good or excellent (85% of which were excellent).

As the day progressed, conversation turned more and more towards the change in healthcare that Schwartz Rounds are enabling, and how we can innovate and develop the Rounds to ensure that this change continues. Professor Jill Maben and Dr Mary Leamy presented their initial findings from their national research study. Jill explained that Homi K. Bhabha proposed the postcolonial theory of a 'third space', a unique space in which a community's identity can be realised through language and interaction. Jill went on to argue that Schwartz Rounds seem to shape a similar counter-cultural

‘third space’ in which emotions are normalised, people are honest, hierarchies are flattened, silence is accepted, and staff are permitted to “step off the treadmill”.

*One delegate, when asked what they liked best about the day, said: “Everything – the buzz, the emotion, the commitment all reinforces the importance of Schwartz – A great 3<sup>rd</sup> space!”*

The passion and appreciation for Schwartz Rounds was tangible in the room, and we began to discuss possible innovations which will help to keep the Rounds and their importance alive. Many felt that using filmed panellists could destroy the essence of Rounds: is film less personal? Will it result in a loss of that feeling of trust involved in sharing a story live? As a one-way communication, how will it benefit listeners? And yet, despite this resistance, possibility opened up: film can help keep momentum when panellists ‘run dry’; it may help to promote the Rounds; it will allow people who cannot attend to still hear the stories and reflect upon them in their own time.

In the ‘Learn, borrow, steal’ session in the afternoon, Laura Golding from the University of Liverpool shared her experience of integrating multidisciplinary Rounds into the curriculum, a poignant reminder that cultural change can only be achieved if students role-model themselves on positive behaviours. Laura’s presentation, like the discussion surrounding the use of film, was a reassuring reminder that Rounds can be adapted and developed in order to enact change at various levels: a space for further innovation began to open up.



Finally, there could have been no better way to illustrate the value of Rounds than to hear from panellists themselves. Aoife Langton shared her entry for the ‘Best Schwartz Photo’ category, describing the story behind the photo: the final moment – a moment of true connection – with one of her physio patients, in which silence and ‘just being there’ became enough; by choosing to sit in silence when treatment would have been too painful, Aoife did more to relieve the emotional trauma of her patient than any treatment ever could have done. Aoife joked about her bravery in posing in her swimming costume in order to take the photo, saying that ‘Schwartz Rounds make you participate in ways that you never thought you would’, once more reminding us of the new space that Rounds shape.

We then heard from Rob Hardiman, a porter at The Christie, whose story on ‘A Patient I’ll Never Forget’ had been submitted as an entry for ‘Most Powerful Round’. Rob told of the personal moments of connection with one particular patient, and how despite the pain and personal loss he consequently felt, he will never forget – and never wants to forget – the day that he met Sean. It is

fair to say that there was not a single person unmoved by Aoife's and Rob's stories, and they powerfully demonstrated the importance of a shared space for reflection. Not only this, but hearing their stories reinforced the unique and incredible power of storytelling, as illustrated by Ben Haggarty earlier that afternoon: the listener is invited to enter the space that the teller recalls, allowing them to share and reflect upon the emotions experienced. As Ben stated, 'story is essential to being human'.

The day 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, changing attitudes to emotion and staff support in various ways. Winners for both the South and the North will be officially announced on our website soon.

Overall, it is fair to say that the day was tremendously successful, with 95% of delegates rating the day either good or excellent. One delegate even wrote that it was the 'best conference [they've] been to in ages'. The day was not only a reminder that Schwartz Rounds are enacting change, but also an inspiration for how we can innovate and develop Rounds to ensure this change continues. Providing a time for innovation, reflection, and the sharing of emotion, the day perhaps embodied that 'third space' that Schwartz Rounds represent, allowing delegates to take the next step for Rounds in their organisation.

Comments made on Twitter (#Schwartzconf2016) both during the event and afterwards certainly suggest that delegates felt like they had entered a space of inspiration and motivation:

- @LisaJBarrett6 "Amazing day at #Schwartzconf2016. How simple story telling can open our eyes. @DCHStrust we need to keep the ball rolling @MaryHeritage
- @juanitaguidera ""Stories are essential to being human" Ben Haggarty. Perhaps that's why Schwartz Rounds resonate – our stories connect us #SchwartzConf2016"
- @AnneCrook5 "Excellent and thought-provoking presentations @ #Schwartzconf2016 – good to see research findings echo our experience @TheChristieNHS"

All here at The Point of Care Foundation felt equally moved and rejuvenated, and we are excited about what lies ahead for Schwartz Rounds as we begin to think about how we can provide further support. We are keen to protect this space to ensure that, in the words of Yusuf Yousuf in his poem 'Schwartz who?', 'we hear you / we don't judge you / we got you'.

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

- Professor Jamie Hacker Hughes' [slides](#)
- Professor Elizabeth Stokoe's [TED talk](#) and [Digital Science talk](#)
- Geraldine Tracey's [slides](#)
- Laura Golding's [slides](#)
- A storify of the day's tweets can be accessed [here](#)
- A dropbox of photos from the day can be found [here](#).