



## Schwartz innovation: Team Time Togetherness

Caring for staff and patients is truly enhanced by Team Time.

Becky, our Matron for children's services, Schwartz facilitator and mentor initiated Team Time in the children's ward at Watford General Hospital in July 2017. Working in paediatrics is so emotionally charged, filled with incredible highs and desolate lows.

Becky has captured the essence of Schwartz Rounds into 15-20 minutes multi-disciplinary sessions, held in clinical areas. People come together 'organically', perched on a bed, or seat, or cupboard in the space being used that day.

Below is a description of Team Time held on 14 December 2017, in the children's emergency department, during an incredibly busy and pressured time.

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People from the children's wards and emergency care gather at 11.00 AM in a small clinical room; the physical closeness mirrors the emotional closeness that follows and reflects how comfortable doctor, nurse, senior leaders are together.

The team understand what Team Time is for. There's a buzz in the room, a relaxed atmosphere and it feels safe. Sweets, anecdotes and good wishes are shared as Christmas approaches. As Becky invites the team to take a minute to consider what's on their minds, the few moments of quiet allow people to switch into the mode of reflective 'me, you and us time'.

Soon, conversations flow and the session largely team-facilitates. As one of the nurses describes how she felt going home after a baby deteriorated in her care; questioning over and over '*did she do everything she could have done for the baby and parents?*' there is a collective feeling of warmth, empathy and support. Immediately others share their understanding of why she would feel she let the family down. As a group, they reframe it into her enormous sense of care and responsibility, the constant desire to get it right for our patients. We acknowledge that we all feel this way sometimes. The nurse smiles and thanks the team for their support

Individuals describe their experience of supporting others and receiving support themselves. They are learning about subtle nuances in how different team members access support. The Head of Nursing, who is a participant and Becky both share that they often come to spend time with the team when they also need a bit of TLC. They don't say this, but receive intuitive care nonetheless. Others echo this sentiment. In the space of a few minutes we have learnt so much about how we care for each other.

Richard, a senior doctor (Schwartz panellist and 'regular') describes how the openness and lack of hierarchy in the team is both highly valuable and unusual. Doctors and nurses routinely share clinical decision-making, challenging assumptions, discussing risks. Richard says this is so important for patient safety.



As facilitator and participant, Becky says Team Time feels more intimate than Rounds. There is no co-facilitator to act as her safety net, someone who might pick up on something she misses; *“this is much more exposing. I'm doing this for my own team”*.

And yet, the validity, value and versatility of true listening and sharing works just as powerfully in this small, simple setting. Afterwards, someone tells Becky she had no idea she was going to speak up. She realised something had been bothering her, subconsciously, for days. This feedback is typical after Team Time. Togetherness enables people to share thoughts and feelings that would not surface so safely in any other forum. Team Time is a shared, protected space in which to acknowledge that there is a high emotional cost to what we do. We could not have the immense personal satisfaction and immense joy that our jobs bring without the emotional investment.

Moving forward, we are taking Team Time into our adult emergency care services. We believe this will help care for our staff who are on the frontline of pressures and crisis every minute of their working day (and carry the impact into their lives).

In summary, Team Time exemplifies why Schwartz Rounds came to be. The model enables the benefits of Schwartz Rounds to be more widely accessible. The extra value is also in enhancing team dynamics and strengthening team working. Being localised, Team Time nurtures ‘real-time’ working relationships and partnerships, just as staff strive to do with their patients. Our staff say Team Time supports them and enhances patient safety.