

Schwartz Community Awards – Most Powerful Round

Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals

In spring 2018 we held a Schwartz round about the impact of suicide. All in Bournemouth see this as our most powerful round and the story is told below like a Schwartz round.

Sean - The clinical lead's view

I was nervous but knew that suicide had impacted on a number of people in our hospital over a number of years. To avoid this subject felt wrong. I remember asking someone to be a panellist who I knew had a story and as he realised what I was asking I could feel the room become still – this was going to be different. We had had a number of conversations to prepare for it and we needed to trust everyone in the room that it would be the right thing to do....

Kate - The facilitator's view

The room was full with double the people than we would normally get. I was very conscious of that and the responsibility laid heavily on me as a facilitator. The emotion and sadness was tangible in the room, with many in tears, in fact we ran out of tissues for those on the front row whose distress I could clearly see. I remember thinking I should have brought more with me. I was totally unprepared for the depth of emotion I witnessed. It was the hardest and yet the easiest round I had ever facilitated, hard from an emotional perspective but easy from a facilitators perspective as the audience were open and willing to share their thoughts, emotions and experience. I felt privileged to be able to facilitate this particular round but came away deeply humbled and saddened by the impact suicide has on loved ones and colleagues. I remember afterwards that the room stayed quite full for longer than usual and I was struck by the support, empathy and consolation that colleagues were giving to each other.

Martin - The panellist's view

'I was asked to talk about the suicide of a colleague and personal friend. Although the tragic event occurred over 10 years ago, as I was working out what I planned to say, it felt that my colleague's death was a very recent memory. I met with the facilitator and felt quite calm about sharing my thoughts and feelings from that time. However just minutes before speaking and seeing the faces of other colleagues of my friend in the audience, I felt overcome with emotion and I could feel the tears building up inside me. I managed to tell my story and one could palpate the sadness that everyone felt. Of course the emotions that I felt were shared by many people in the audience. I wasn't the only one affected by this tragic event and I believe that the Schwartz round highlight both the desperate tragedy of suicide and also how far more common it is that most people believe, particularly in healthcare workers. For me, I was also able to openly express my personal sadness and show the deep effect that this event had had upon me.'

Louise - The audience member's view

I wasn't sure if I actually wanted to attend this particular round, having lost a close friend to suicide many years ago. Naturally, he was in my thoughts when I heard the topic. However, I felt drawn to attend. There was an inevitable air of tension and anticipation as the room started to fill. I thought it was a brave topic, and I wasn't entirely convinced it was even a good idea....

Quickly, it became very clear that this round was going to be OK. That it was safe. And although the room was filled with sadness and grief, there was unspoken kindness amongst colleagues. In many of the stories, the panellists spoke about guilt, asking themselves the question "*could I have done anything to stop them?*" Following this, an audience member bravely shared her own tragic experience that she did know her friend was going to take their own life, and yet she still could not do anything to help them. It was personally cathartic to hear this. For me, it was a moment where it felt like the room exhaled. With the most difficult of topics, this was an authentic and unifying round. I am so pleased that I decided to go.