

NICHE FINAL REPORT - APRIL 2025

Interprofessional Schwartz Rounds: Students' experience and perceived benefits for wellbeing and reflective practice (R212965 NICHE)

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A) Programme outline

Background

Working in health and social care settings is recognised as being stressful and demanding. It is also recognised that the wellbeing of health professionals impacts the wellbeing of - and quality of care provided to - patients and service users. Schwartz Rounds (Rounds) are multidisciplinary forums led by trained facilitators and are licensed in the UK by the [Point of Care Foundation](#), a charity dedicated to humanising health care. They provide attendees an opportunity to participate in group reflective practice in a confidential safe space, and to witness colleagues role-model how to acknowledge and normalise emotional responses to the clinical work they do.

In a typical in-person Round, attendees have 30 minutes to share food together and mix. Rounds are one hour long. They start with three storytellers who share a brief story on a pre-determined theme that is grounded in clinical work (e.g., A patient I will never forget). Two trained facilitators guide the group discussion and invite members of the audience to share their reflections on the stories they heard. Discussion focuses on the emotional responses to these stories, not on problem solving. Participants are free to contribute and share or reflect in silence.

Research in clinical settings, where Rounds were originally introduced, shows that staff who participate in Rounds regularly report decreased feelings of isolation and stress; enhanced psychological wellbeing; improved teamwork and communication; increased empathy and compassion for patients and colleagues; and diminished hierarchies between senior and junior staff (Maben et al., 2018).

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have recently integrated Rounds as innovative ways of supporting health professional students' reflective practice, interprofessional learning and compassionate care. In educational settings, Rounds are optional learning events, in which students come together to discuss and reflect on the emotional and personal aspects of their clinical training. Research on the impact of Rounds on students' wellbeing, compassionate care and professional development is limited, reflecting their recent introduction to HEIs.

UEA Schwartz Rounds

At UEA, Schwartz Rounds were licensed by the PoCF and funded by the [Centre for Interprofessional Practice \(CIPP\)](#) in July 2022. They have been running successfully since then. UEA's Rounds are interprofessional and offered to students and members of staff in the schools of medicine, clinical psychology and psychological therapies, pharmacy, health sciences, and social work. To date, the team has delivered twelve Rounds, welcomed over 350 attendees from a range of disciplines, and listened to over 30 storytellers reflect on their personal experiences. Six trained facilitators plan, prepare and support the delivery of the Rounds through careful facilitation of group reflection and discussion.

The research project

The aim of this funded research project was to evaluate the effectiveness of UEA's Rounds and to develop an understanding of how a range of health and social care students experience their participation in them. We wanted a) to assess the impact of UEA's Rounds as an educational approach and medium for promoting wellbeing and reflective practice and b) to contribute to the Rounds' development in the future. This project brought together trainees working in multiple fields across the East of England region and entering professions where staff retention and wellbeing continue to be considered significant areas for development.

The research consisted of three parts and addressed the following research questions:

1. Systematic Review

A Systematic Review of the current literature regarding health students' evaluation of Rounds in HEIs, exploring experiences and perceived benefits of participating.

2. Schwartz Rounds evaluation

- Do the perceived benefits of attending Rounds vary according to factors such as trainee age, gender, ethnicity, programme or year of study?
- How does the theme set for each Round influence participation and feedback?

3. Follow-up interviews with Round attendees

- What is the experience of UEA health and social care students who participate in interprofessional student Schwartz Rounds?
- How do health and social care students perceive participation in Rounds to impact the development of career sustaining behaviours and attitudes?
- How do health and social care students perceive participation in Rounds to impact the development of compassion for themselves and others?

B) Outcomes

The research was conducted between September 2023 and December 2024. Ethics approval was obtained from FMH research ethics committee in July 2023 (ETH2223-1509). Amy Zile was employed as part-time research associate and worked with the two projects leads (Georgia Panagiotaki and Joel Owen) to collect and analyse the quantitative and qualitative data, promote the Rounds across the university, and disseminate findings in conferences, networking events and written publications. Evaluation data was collected from nine interprofessional Rounds delivered at UEA during this period.

Below are the key findings/outcomes of our work:

1. Systematic Review

We published an original peer-reviewed systematic review that identified and synthesised findings regarding Schwartz Rounds in HE. Our findings suggest that student Schwartz Rounds promote teamwork and connection, normalise emotions and emphasise the human side of care, improve self-awareness and facilitate reflection, and resonate with students' daily work. Our review also suggests that the quality of research in this area to date is mixed, reflecting the relatively recent integration of Rounds in HE, and the challenges of implementing and evaluating new interventions in educational settings. We posited a number of potential reasons for this (e.g., the use of differing measurements and scales) and made recommendations for future work in the area (e.g., organisations need to use comparable evaluation questions, large enough samples and cross-case or cross-Round outcome measures to allow meaningful learning). The review can be accessed here [Schwartz Rounds in Higher Education](#).

2. Schwartz Rounds evaluation

For this part of the evaluation, we used the Point of Care Foundation's evaluation questionnaire to assess how successful UEA's Rounds were and how participants found the experience of attending one or more events.

A total of 164 attendees - a combination of students and staff members from different health and social care courses at UEA - took part in the evaluation of nine interprofessional Schwarz Rounds. Attendance in those Rounds was higher with over 350 attendees in total. Response rate to the evaluation was 56%. Below are the respondents' demographic characteristics (Figures 1-6):

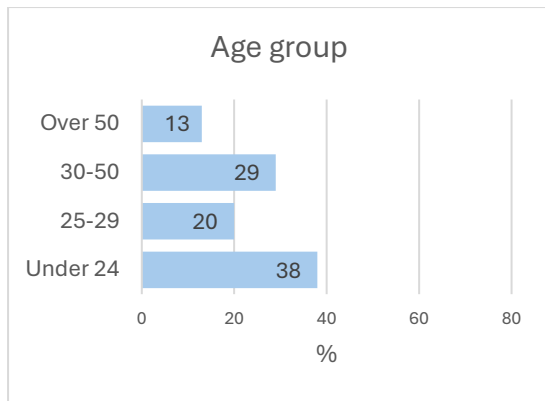


Figure 1. Participants' age

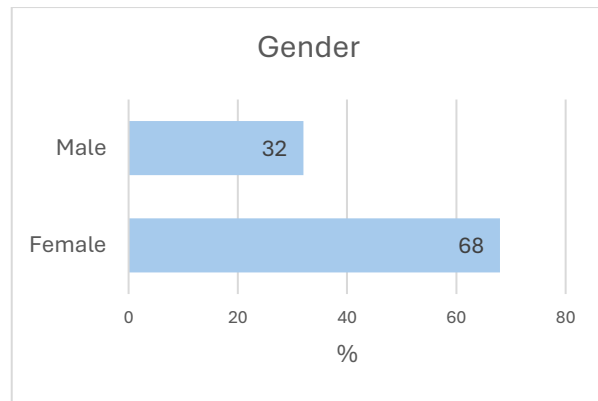


Figure 2. Participants' gender

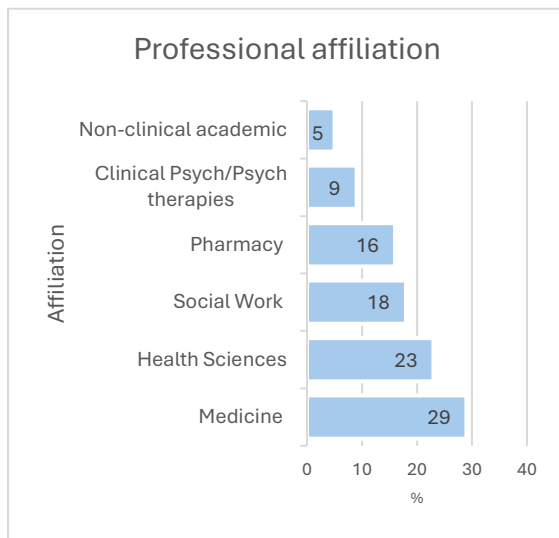


Figure 3. Participants' affiliation

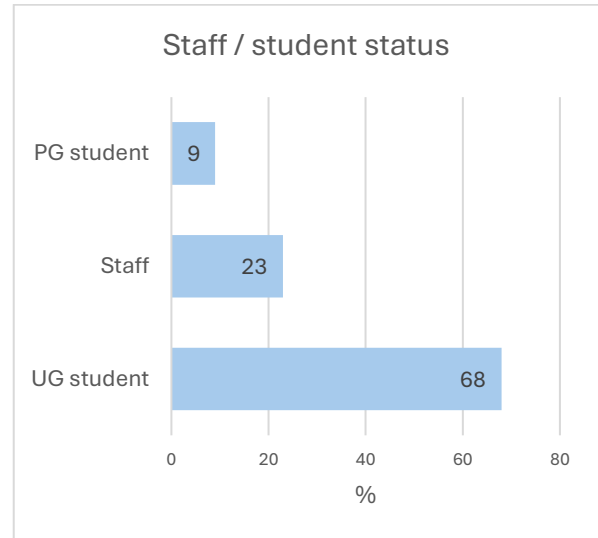


Figure 4. Participants' status (staff or student)

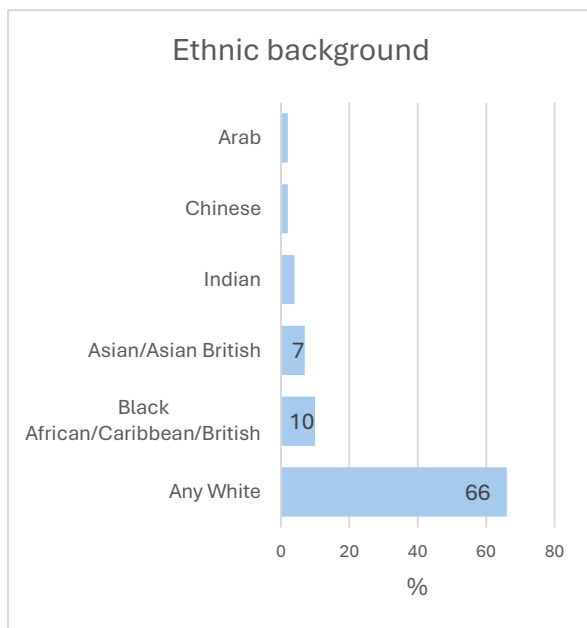


Figure 5. Participants' ethnic background

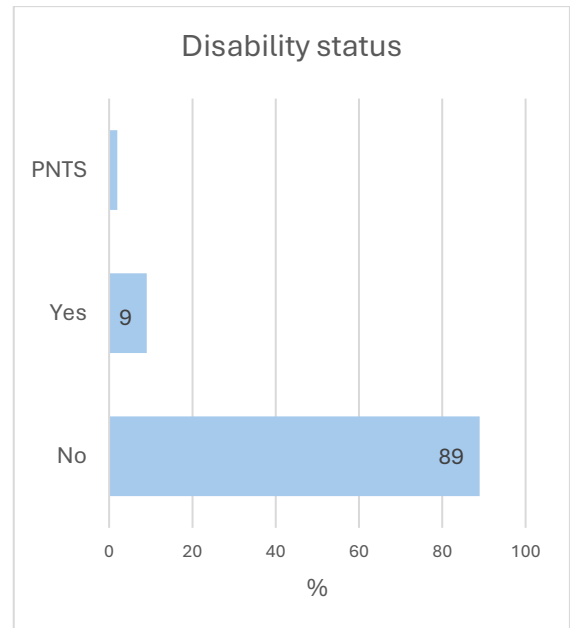


Figure 6. Participants' disability status

As Figure 7 shows, most attendees rated the Rounds as an excellent or exceptional experience with somewhat lower ratings given to the Round delivered online, suggesting that the experience of in-person attendance is more positive for those taking part.

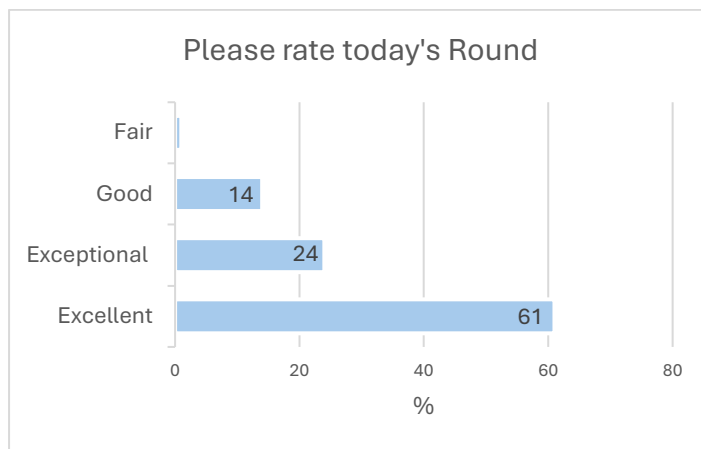


Figure 7. Ratings of Schwartz Rounds (N=9)

Analysis of the ratings participants gave to the survey questions, explained why their experience was overwhelmingly positive. When the nine Point of Care Foundation (PoCF) evaluation questions were grouped into three new variables, mean ratings ranged from 4.40 to 4.53 as the Table 1 shows.

Grouped variables from PoCF questions	Mean	SD
Rounds are relevant to clinical work/training and support compassionate care and self-awareness	4.40	.62
Rounds enhance connection, promote interprofessional understanding and teamwork	4.45	.57
The content, discussion and presenters were helpful	4.53	.54

Table 1. Mean scores of responses (possible max = 5)

There were no statistically significant differences in these ratings between different themes of the in-person Rounds (N=8), suggesting that regardless of theme, the experience of attending Rounds was consistently positive (Figure 8).

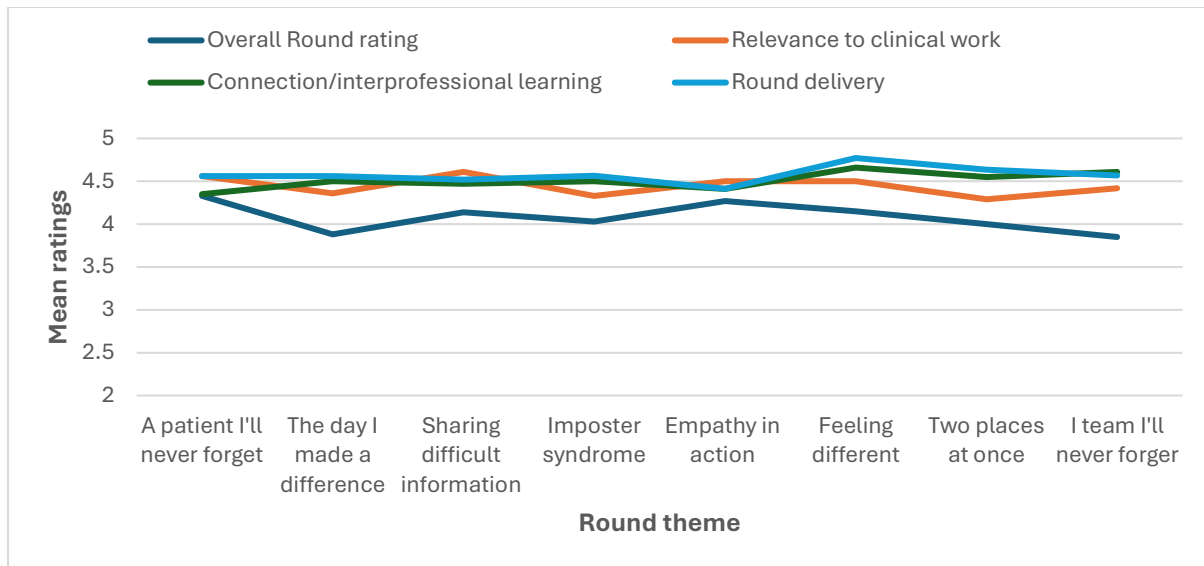


Figure 8. Mean ratings of Rounds by theme (1-5 Likert scale)

This data suggests that participants experienced Rounds as very relevant to their clinical work or training, and helpful in supporting compassionate care and self-awareness. Attendees viewed the Rounds as a tool that promotes teamwork and enhances connection between colleagues from different disciplines. They also viewed the content of the Rounds, delivered through storytelling, and the subsequent discussion and group reflection as very helpful. This was the case across all in-person Rounds, across professional affiliation/course of study, and regardless of participants' ethnicity and disability status.

The youngest and oldest of participants (under 24 and over 50 years respectively) tended to rate the Rounds more positively than those in the 30–50-year-old group. Members of staff and female participants also gave slightly higher ratings than students and male participants, but these differences did not always reach statistical significance.

When participants were asked whether Rounds should be integrated into the curriculum, 70% responded 'yes' and 28% 'maybe'. Of those who agreed that Rounds should be integrated (n=114), 49% suggested integration in all or most years of their professional course and 41% in the early years, with many commenting on the relevance of Rounds as soon as students begin clinical practice. As one participant wrote: *"In all years. The importance of the sessions cannot be constrained to any certain point in our training"*.

When asked about their motivation for joining a Round, attendees cited curiosity, interest in the topic being discussed and certain themes resonating with them. When

themes related to attendees' personal experiences, Rounds were viewed as a space where they felt reassured and not alone. Some attendees came to Rounds as they could link the topic discussed to their course content or their future practice and where they appreciated hearing the perspectives of other professionals. A small number cited their motivation for attending as helping them keep engaged with their course or helping them with assignments. Reasons for attending frequently referenced Rounds as a space for reflection, an insightful experience, and a safe place that allowed time for experiences to resonate and be processed.

Below are some extracts from students' open text comments:

"I have attended previous Rounds and have always found them to be very though provoking, powerful experience which helps drive home the human side of healthcare"

"The panellists did an amazing job at presenting their wonderful stories and it was a pleasure to listen and discuss with them. Glad I took the hour out of my day to stop, listen, reflect, and share with others"

3. Follow-up interviews with Round attendees

For this part of the research, we conducted individual semi-structured interviews with students and staff (n=11) who had attended one or more UEA Rounds. Interviews were open and designed to explore how students and staff experienced taking part in Rounds, and how Rounds were perceived to influence student career behaviours. Examples of questions included: a) Please can you describe what it was like attending the Round?; b) Can you describe how you felt after the Round?; c) Was there anything in particular that you took away from attending the Round? d) Was there anything you found helpful about attending the Round? The qualitative data generated from these interviews was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2019).

One overarching and three main themes were developed. These are summarised below:

Overarching theme		
Interprofessional Rounds positively challenge aspects of the healthcare training culture and prepare students for the realities of work in the modern healthcare workforce.		
Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
‘I realised it was an element our course is lacking’ Interprofessional Rounds promote an emotionally resilient approach to training.	‘Oh, actually everyone’s human’ Interprofessional Rounds promote a culture of connection.	‘You never know what’s going to happen...’ Interprofessional Rounds stimulate and stretch students, requiring them to be flexible and dynamic in their learning.

Overarching theme

Rounds were perceived as helping to challenge aspects of the training culture in positive ways and helping to prepare students for the realities and complexities of work in the modern health and social care workforce. Rounds were experienced as providing an honest and frank account of work in the field, bringing students back to the fundamentally human nature of this work, and gently challenging assumptions about how training should function, what it should aim at, or how best to prepare students to thrive in the workforce.

Theme 1: Rounds promote an emotionally resilient approach to training

Participants spoke in depth about their view of Rounds as providing a much valued and otherwise lacking forum for discussing the emotional components of their work. They spoke about how this forum, and the attitude promoted through it, encouraged a healthy openness towards emotions and the human side of care. Participants, including both trainees and staff, highly valued this space and the approach towards clinical work that it encourages, seeing it as fundamental to the development of an emotionally resilient workforce. Participants described how Rounds brought them back to the fundamentally human nature of work in this field, encouraging them to view success in the field not only in terms of academic knowledge and clinical competence, but also in terms of emotional resilience, compassion, and the human qualities of good care.

Theme 2: Rounds promote a culture of connection

Rounds were described as fundamentally connecting and deeply interpersonal. Rounds were perceived to break down interprofessional barriers, connecting people across professions and roles. This was because of the way in which Rounds allow the demonstration of vulnerability, self-doubt and shared experience, engendering a sense of common humanity amongst students and staff, and across professions. Participants described how this sense of connection shaped their attitude towards colleagues and peers from other professions and encouraged in them an attitude of openness and curiosity towards others.

Theme 3: Rounds stimulate and stretch students, requiring them to be flexible and dynamic in their learning

Rounds were described by participants as occasionally challenging, and something which both facilitated and required a flexible, adaptive and deeply thoughtful approach. Rounds were experienced as meaningfully different to other forms of learning, challenging underlying assumptions about what training should do or how it should function. Participants described the value and learning they considered themselves to be taking from Rounds as powerful yet harder to describe and less obviously practical or direct than that taken from the rest of their training.

Across these interviews, Rounds were described as a positive and desired addition to the students' training. They were viewed as playing an important role in offering students a rounded, frank and comprehensive preparation for healthy and resilient careers in the health and social care field.

C) Key learning points and recommendations

From our research findings:

- Results from the three primary outcomes of our project (systematic review, evaluation, and interview study) suggest that Rounds are positively experienced and highly valued by health and social care students, regardless of their theme or the professional affiliation of those attending. Rounds appear to help students manage the emotional challenges of training in health care, feel more prepared for the challenges of clinical work, and be part of an emotionally open culture.
- The interprofessional nature of Rounds was identified as a key strength in promoting connection and breaking down professional barriers and hierarchies. It is important therefore to continue delivering interprofessional Rounds and encouraging students and staff from diverse backgrounds and disciplines to share their stories.
- Rounds can offer a valuable addition to health and social care curricula that can fill significant gaps in students' professional development. Given that 70% of participants supported curriculum integration, UEA should explore the formal integration of Interprofessional Student Schwartz Rounds into all health and social work programmes.
- The quality of early research in this area is mixed, reflecting the challenges of implementing and evaluating new interventions in educational settings.
Therefore:
 - A well-designed evaluation strategy with clear objectives and metrics is essential to demonstrate the impact of Rounds and guide future research.
 - Long-term impact studies need to follow on from this research to explore the lasting effects of Rounds on health professionals' wellbeing, quality of care and retention. Follow-up studies could explore changes in student and staff wellbeing (e.g., reduced stress, burnout, isolation), and perceived impact on teamwork, communication and compassion. It is also important to assess what best practice implications emerge from students' participation in Rounds over a period of time (e.g., changes in behaviours, improved approaches to patient care, enhanced team dynamics).

From our experience of delivering UEA's interprofessional Rounds:

- Grounding Round themes in clinical reality and student experiences (e.g., empathy in action, death and dying, discrimination at work) ensures that Rounds

remain an impactful and relevant space for participants to engage in meaningful reflection, emotional awareness, and interprofessional learning.

- In-person Rounds may offer a more meaningful experience than online, due to the opportunity participants have to share food beforehand, interact with professionals from different disciplines, and feel 'looked after' at a personal, emotional and organisational level.
- Implementing Rounds requires significant time and effort from facilitators, storytellers, administrative staff, academics/clinicians involved in curriculum integration, and researchers involved in evaluation. It is critical therefore to:
 - Value and protect staff/student time to attend Rounds
 - Expand the team of trained facilitators to ensure continued effective delivery
 - Dedicate resources – financial, personnel, time – to ensure sustainability
 - Develop a clear and consistent communication strategy to raise awareness and encourage participation
 - Highlight the potential benefits of attending Rounds for wellbeing, team cohesion and improved patient care
 - Share success stories and testimonials to build engagement

D) Conclusions

The findings of our work suggest that investing in Rounds in this region and working to ensure their availability for students during training is strongly recommended. Given the widely acknowledged connection between the wellbeing of clinicians (including those in training), and important outcomes such as staff retention, clinical outcomes, and academic attainment, investing in Rounds in this way has the potential to benefit the regional workforce and the people that it serves.

E) List of outputs

Publications

Zile, A., Owen, J., Gorick, H., Orford, A., & Panagiotaki, G. (2025). Schwartz Rounds in Higher Education Settings: A Systematic Review of the Research with Recommendations. *Journal of Medical Education and Curricular Development*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23821205251320152>

Owen, J. Panagiotaki, G. and Lindqvist, S. (2025). Sharing is caring. Chapter in *Workplace wellbeing for nurses, health and care professionals*. Critical Publishing (Book draft accepted).

Invited talks

Panagiotaki, G. Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing of Medical Students. 9th Sharing Experience Session. Medical Education Center, University of Sharjah, February 2024.

Owen, J., Panagiotaki, G., & Zile, A. Optimising Wellbeing through Interprofessional Schwartz Rounds at UEA: what we know so far about healthcare professionals' experience attending Rounds. NICHE Shared Learning Event, April 2024.

Panagiotaki, G. and Burton, C. Weaving in Schwartz Rounds as part of the IPE journey. CAIPE Regional Forum, UEA, Spring 2025.

Conference presentations and Posters

Panagiotaki, G., Owen, J., Cooper, H., Hannewald, J. & Zile, A. Interprofessional Student Schwartz Rounds: Students' experience and perceived benefits for well-being and reflective practice. NICHE conference, UEA, September 2023.

Panagiotaki, G., Zile, A. & Owen, J. Optimising well-being through Interprofessional Schwartz Rounds at UEA: what we know so far about students' experience attending Rounds. UEA Student Experience Conference CHERRPS, March 2024.

Panagiotaki, G., Zile, A., & Owen, J. Schwartz Rounds in HE: Students' experience and perceived benefits for well-being. Student Mental Health Conference SMARTEN, KCL, June 2024.

Zile, A., Panagiotaki, & G., Owen, J. Schwartz Round in HEI's. Mental Well-being in Higher Education, Advance HE, Leeds, May 2024.

Zile, A. Owen, J. Gorick, H., Orford, A. & Panagiotaki, G. Interprofessional Student Schwartz Rounds: Students' experience and perceived benefits for wellbeing and reflective practice - a systematic review. Lifespan and Population Health Research Centre's PGR and ECR Conference, UEA, June 2024. Prize for best ECR poster.

Blogs, webpages, news

Panagiotaki, G. Lindqvist, S., Owen, J., Zile, A (2024) UEA's Interprofessional student Schwartz

Rounds: Our journey so far. NICHE Blog, March 2024. [NICHE BLOG - 21st MARCH 2024](#)

UEA Schwartz Rounds pages [Interprofessional Student Schwartz Rounds - Groups and Centres](#)

Lasdun News Feb 24 [A year of Schwartz Rounds at UEA | UEA](#)