

UEA's INTERPROFESSIONAL STUDENT SCHWARTZ ROUNDS: OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

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In January 2024, we celebrated our one-year anniversary of holding Interprofessional Student Schwartz Rounds at the University of East Anglia. This is our second year of working with wonderful storytellers, expert facilitators and engaging audiences who are becoming members of UEA's Schwartz Rounds community. With the support of NICHE, we're also evaluating the Rounds; asking questions about who attends them, whether they benefit from doing so, and how the experience of participating influences their work and training. We will use findings to support the efforts of NICHE to improve the health and well-being of those who live and work in our region.

UEA Rounds are open to all students and staff in the schools of Social Work, Pharmacy, Health Sciences and Medicine. We're reaching those entering the health and social care workforce across a range of health and social care professions in our region. Rounds are licensed by the [Point of Care Foundation](#) and funded by the Centre for Interprofessional Practice [CIPP](#). Our evaluation is funded by [NICHE](#).

Many people have heard of Schwartz Rounds but don't know much about their origins and philosophy, how they work, and why they are currently running in over 280 UK health organizations, including community and mental health trusts, hospices, primary care, and over 40 UK universities.

Origins. Rounds are the legacy of Ken Schwartz, a health attorney in the US who was diagnosed with incurable lung cancer in 1994. During his treatment he talked openly about the simple acts of kindness from his caregivers that made "the unbearable bearable". Before his death, he left a legacy for the establishment of the Schwartz Round Centre in Boston, to help foster a compassionate culture in health care. In 2009, Schwartz Rounds were introduced to the UK and embedded in many health and educational settings.

Schwartz Rounds are confidential and multidisciplinary forums designed for staff and students to come together regularly and reflect on the emotional and social aspects of their clinical work and training. Their group format offers space for emotional connection that promotes openness, support, and compassion. Their philosophy is that compassionate care makes the difference to patients' experience. And that to be able to provide compassionate care, staff need to feel supported in the work they do.

What happens in a Schwartz Round? Attendees have 30 minutes before a Round to share food together. Rounds are one hour long. They start with three storytellers who have prepared a brief story on a theme such as 'A patient I will never forget' or 'Feeling different'. Two trained facilitators guide a group discussion and invite members of the audience to share their reflections and thoughts on the stories they've heard. Discussion focuses on the emotional response to these stories, not on problem solving. Participants are free to contribute or reflect in silence. Rounds can be emotional, sad, funny, sensitive and thought provoking.

What are their benefits? There is evidence that regular attendance of Rounds is associated with significant improvements in staff psychological well-being and positive changes in patient care delivery. They reduce professional hierarchies, improve communication between colleagues, and decrease work stress (Point of Care Foundation, 2022). They have a positive impact on empathy, compassion, and reduce feelings of isolation (Maben et al., 2018). Rounds can support us to continue delivering compassionate care while keeping in touch with our own humanity.

Can students benefit too? There is increasing evidence to suggest that Schwartz Rounds can support health and social care students and apprentices in powerful ways. They provide a structured space where people come together and openly discuss the emotional aspects of their training. Rounds help normalise strong emotions that arise from clinical training and enable learners to gain appreciation of the work other health and social care professionals do. Meeting in this way allows for impactful interprofessional learning about self and others. In a nutshell, Schwartz Rounds can help equip students for their careers by shaping a positive working culture where communication, compassion and value of everyone is role modelled and at the heart of their learning.

Our evaluation. Students represent the future of our health and social care workforce so investment in this aspect of their training is critical. Today's graduates join a workforce grappling with challenges linked with staff shortages, an ageing population, increased social isolation and more. As part of NICHE's workstream for 'Optimising Well-being', our project is evaluating the potential for Interprofessional Schwartz Rounds to positively impact the well-being of health and social care students, many of whom will enter the workforce in our region. We are using interviews with attendees and the gathering of survey data, to explore how Rounds may help foster career sustaining behaviours and attitudes, as graduates transition into practice. Dr Amy Zile, the projects' skilled and expert RA is co-ordinating the evaluation and conducting interviews with volunteer participants while working on a systematic review that explores the perceived benefits of attending Rounds for well-being and reflective practice.

Our Schwartz Round journey so far. Since the launch of UEA's Schwartz Rounds in July 2022 - thanks to Harriet Cooper who introduced them to UEA with CIPP funding - we have offered six Rounds and are advertising two more. Our Rounds take place in person. We will experiment with our first virtual event in May, to enable more people to attend, after which we will pause for the summer. We will be working hard to renew our licence and continue offering Rounds at UEA.

Around 195 students and staff members from Medicine, Social Work, Pharmacy and Health Sciences have joined one or more Rounds so far. We have listened to 17 wonderful storytellers who shared memories of patients they will never forget, feelings around the day they made a difference, challenges in disclosing sensitive news, their experience of imposter syndrome, empathy in action and feeling different. Our final two Rounds for this year will touch on the experience of being in two places at a time and on what it feels like to fly the nest respectively! Storytellers' willingness to show vulnerability in front of a group has encouraged many attendees to share their own stories. Our trained facilitators, Jane Blowers (HSC), Michelle Fromage (MED), Julia Hannewald (MED), Natasha Rennolds (SWK) and Anna Wright (SWK), have 'held us in safety' and guided group reflections with great sensitivity and skill.

Liz Davison (MED), our excellent administrator, and steering group member, always ensures that Rounds are well organised with plenty of good coffee and cake for everyone!

We have received very positive feedback from 106 students and staff who have shared their thoughts about the experience of attending a Round. Participants are telling us that Rounds are emotive, powerful, and useful, and rate them as excellent or exceptional:

100% of student attendees felt hearing others talk
openly about their personal feelings in the context
of their work was helpful to them

 100%

100% of student attendees rated the
Round as Good, Excellent or Exceptional

 100%

Students attend the Rounds out of curiosity, to keep them engaged in the course, and because previous Rounds have been insightful (and the cake is good!). Around 80% of student attendees think Rounds should be introduced into their curriculum, and over 85% have reported Rounds helping them gain insight and knowledge that will help them in their clinical training and experience caring for patients. Many feel that Rounds offer a safe space for reflection and plan to attend again:

“ I found the last one to be a very thought provoking
and insightful experience, and since then decided to
attend every session I could ”

“ I thought the storytellers were brave discussing
their fears, feelings and experiences - and that by
doing this they created a safe space for others to
share. Thank you to all! ”

What is next? Setting up Schwartz Rounds at UEA has involved a lot of hard work and the learning has been invaluable. Our community is growing, and we are so pleased to see students and colleagues returning to listen to and share reflections around clinical practice. We are working in partnership with colleagues from [Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care System](#) to expand our Schwartz Round community beyond UEA. This will allow us to continue Ken Schwartz's legacy by fostering a compassionate culture in health care through supporting and taking care of people studying, living, and working in our region.

References and links

Maben J, Taylor C, Dawson J, Leamy M, McCarthy I, Reynolds E, et al. [A realist informed mixed-methods evaluation of Schwartz Center Rounds® in England](#) Health Serv Deliv Res 2018;6(37)

[Schwartz Rounds in Higher Education - Point of Care Foundation](#)

[Impact Report 2022 - Point of Care Foundation](#)

[Interprofessional Student Schwartz Rounds - Groups and Centres \(uea.ac.uk\)](#)