



Schwartz Awards 2021: Most Powerful Schwartz Round

'When Covid gets too close: being a patient and caring for colleagues'

Our Schwartz Rounds at Ashford & St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust ('ASPH') are continuing virtually, via MSTEams. Whilst the virtual setting lacks some of the empathy that comes from simply sitting physically alongside colleagues, the discussions remain incredibly meaningful and valuable. At the Round on 24 February 2021 nearly 60 colleagues met to hear and share reflections around 'When Covid gets too close: being a patient and caring for colleagues'.



We heard from a colleague who contracted Covid during the first wave and spent time on ITU - this has been the scariest thing they have ever experienced. They spoke of their fears whilst intubated and sedated - fear that they would not wake up, fear that they might not survive at all, and of the shock they felt on waking up surrounded by staff in full PPE. All they wanted was someone to simply hold their hand and reassure them.



We heard about the shock experienced by another panellist on hearing that their colleague had been admitted to the ward with Covid. They witnessed the phone calls made to the family before the transfer to ITU, during which the family members did not appear to comprehend the gravity of the situation and how worrying that was. Their parting words before the transfer to ITU weighed heavily on them, realising with hindsight that there was a chance they may not survive.



Our final panellist, an experienced colleague, shared their reflections on arriving at work at the start of the pandemic and realising it was the first time they had ever felt scared to come to work. They recounted intubating their first patient with Covid whilst wearing full PPE and how surreal that felt. They expressed fear and concern on hearing about hospital admissions of colleagues and friends who were younger than them, and the shock on grasping the enormity of the situation. Trained staff implement their professional defences to protect themselves but this becomes particularly challenging when a patient is also a colleague.



Alongside this the speakers reflected on their increased respect for all members of Team ASPH and how they have coped throughout the pandemic. Colleagues who have been redeployed have sometimes felt inadequate, but rather than focus on the ability to complete the 'tasks', it is in fact the care they give to our patients which is important - holding their hands, giving a reassuring touch, washing them, brushing their hair - all of which have a huge impact and bring great comfort. Speakers and members of the audience once again expressed their pride at being part of Team ASPH – there is a sense of collective experience that we can draw comfort from and which enables us all, clinical and non-clinical colleagues, to work alongside each other.



Thank you so much for another powerful time together. The pain and the privilege is so tangible.

I feel so proud, humble and lucky to work at ASPH.

It has been a privilege just to even be allowed to sit in and listen to this. Thank you

The Trust ethos of #ittakesateam has never been so relevant!

I'm so choked I find it so so upsetting, my biggest fear is of catching Covid, and I am so in awe of our front line staff - the bravery it took for you to come into work every day. I love my job but I have never had to be brave to do it.

That's so powerful, tearful now.

Thank you, I don't know how you held yourself together so professionally and facilitated so beautifully, without a big box of tissues!

Phenomenally powerful, thank you for your honesty all those who have spoken.

Thank you so much to all the panel and those who spoke up. My silence is from respect to you all,

It's when we stop we are likely to find our feelings...

Thank you for this SR - powerful, affirmative, reassuring that we are not alone in our feelings or that support is available.

Very moving account.

It's very easy to downplay our own parts & compare to ITU or working in red wards - we can also feel guilt if we've been off sick, that we've let colleagues down. We need to look after ourselves in order to look after others - our Trust strapline "TogetherWeCare" is so apt!