

TEAMWORK IS KEY TO DEALING WITH STRESS

HSE Schwartz Rounds intervention methods have shown to benefit teamwork and support reductions in staff stress levels, according to the findings of an independent evaluation by Trinity College Dublin, while a UK study shows that five per cent improvement in teamwork can save 40 lives each year in an average-sized hospital.

The Health Service Executive, in partnership with the Point of Care Foundation, has welcomed independent findings by Trinity College Dublin that intervention and evaluation directly benefits teamwork and supports HSE staff in dealing with often stressful workplaces.

Schwartz Rounds are facilitated conversations for healthcare staff about the emotional impact of their work. In an environment where staff support people at all stages of their healthcare journey, this space provides a vital opportunity for them to reflect on often unspoken moments that have had an impact on them as individuals.

Dr Philip Crowley, HSE's National Director of Quality Improvement, who commissioned the intervention and evaluation said: "International research tells us that a key indicator of a quality service is teamwork and a workplace culture underpinned by psychological safety, trust and respect. Teamwork in healthcare is essential to patient outcomes."

He said that in a UK study led by Prof Michael West, researchers identified that a five per cent improvement in teamwork improved patient mortality by 3.3%. "The findings of the independent report by TCD indicate that Schwartz Rounds is one way of bringing two vital components of teamwork to an organisation – shared purpose and effective communication. This is very encouraging given the potential long term impact on patient safety," he noted.

REPORT HAS NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The lead authors, Doctors Vivienne Brady and Margarita Corry of TCD's School of Nursing & Midwifery, said that the report has significant implications for roll out and implementation of Schwartz Rounds nationally.

"While specific challenges were evident for test-of-concept sites, positive aspects of Schwartz Rounds were reported by staff who participated in and embraced the concept. Our findings indicate that Schwartz Rounds offers a forum to share experiences where staff at all levels are willing to be open and vulnerable with others," they claimed.



Paul Reid, HSE Director General (back row, second from right) pictured at the launch of the 'Independent Evaluation of Schwartz Rounds' with TCD research team members, the HSE National Quality Improvement team that commissioned the report, Schwartz Rounds clinical leads and facilitators from Our Lady's Hospice and Care Services, Blackrock Hospice and Galway University Hospitals and the Point of Care Foundation.

Areas consistently highlighted by respondents included gaining greater insight into self and others, the breaking down of barriers and levelling of hierarchical structure.

"What is also exciting in this evaluation, the first of its kind in Ireland, is that the sense of community, connectedness, respect for others and the awareness of emotional and support needs of self and others reported in this study, has the potential to contribute to the management of workplace burnout," the authors noted.

Dr Jocelyn Cornwell, CEO and Founder Point of Care Foundation (a UK-based independent charity with a mission to humanise healthcare), noted: "The potential of Schwartz Rounds to reach all staff is particularly powerful and we look forward to continuing to mentor teams from the now 22 organisations trained to facilitate Schwartz Rounds throughout Ireland and seeing this work spread organically."

Visit www.staffengagement.ie for the report and for more information on Schwartz Rounds.