

A “Dramatic” Approach to Schwartz Center Rounds

Carol A Tringali, MS, RN, AOCNS
 Penn State Milton S Hershey Medical Center
 Penn State Hershey Cancer Institute

Introduction

Professional caregivers frequently face difficult emotional and social issues during interactions with patients and families. Self-awareness and discussion of the impact of these stressful issues on one’s performance is limited by demands of the hectic workday.

In this Oncology Nursing Society “2011 - Year of Psychosocial Care”, we should acknowledge the importance of taking care of ourselves as we generously give of our time and energy to patients and colleagues.

Schwartz Center Rounds®

- A multidisciplinary forum.
- Participants discuss difficult emotional and social issues that arise in caring for patients.
- Participants share experiences, thoughts, and feelings on a pre-selected topic.
- Participants engage in discussion and supportive feedback.

The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare has the mission to support and advance compassionate health care in which caregivers, patients and their families relate to one another in a way that provides hope to the patient, support to caregivers, and sustenance to the healing process.
www.theschwartzcenter.org

A “Dramatic” Approach

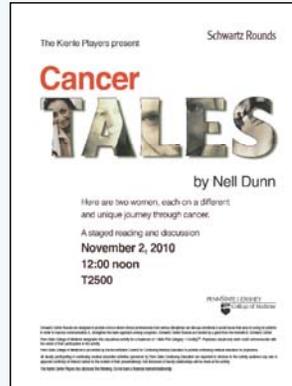
The Kienle Center Players—a medical theater group sponsored by the Doctors Kienle Center for Humanistic Medicine at Penn State Hershey Medical Center—is composed of faculty, students, and medical center staff. This group performed a staged reading during each of the last two years of our monthly Schwartz Center Rounds.

A staged reading performance of excerpts from *Cancer Tales**, written by British playwright Nell Dunn, was performed in place of our usual panel presentation format. With minimal stage setting and props, actors use eye contact, facial expression, body language, and voice tone to provide important emphasis as they read from their scripts.

Performances can be prepared with few rehearsals and very little attention to staging. The staged reading runs for about 30 minutes, leaving the rest of the hour for discussion about the feelings evoked by the clinical situation.

**Cancer Tales*, by Nell Dunn, is published in Great Britain by Haymarket Medical Publications, London, 2007. No performance may be given unless a license has been obtained from:

Alan Brodie Representation
 6th Floor, Fairgate House
 78 New Oxford Street
 London WC1A 1HB.



Two of five vignettes from this play were presented and assisted the audience in dealing with the following issues:

- Tumor recurrence.
- Challenges of maintaining personal privacy.
- Developing trust with one’s physician.
- Role changes in the midst of life threatening illness.
- Scheduling difficulties between life as usual and treatments.
- Existential concerns.

At the conclusion of the dramatic reading, the audience is invited to reflect upon the author’s message and to share the ways in which our experiences are similar and/or different from those depicted in the play.

Responses from Attendees

Bravo! to all.

Very moving presentation.

Evoked many powerful emotions.

Great, Great, and more Great.

Exceptional presentation – should be presented to all med students as they prepare for the field of medicine.

The skit really helped spark the discussion.

Very beneficial presentation in these times when productivity is in such demand.

Very well done! Thank you.

Conclusions

Innovative approaches to presentation of Schwartz Center Rounds can effectively stir introspection and stimulate beneficial discussion related to patients’ and caregivers’ perceptions of how we respond, or fail to respond, to patients’ needs. Understanding how patients and families define empathic care will improve communication between health professionals and patients.

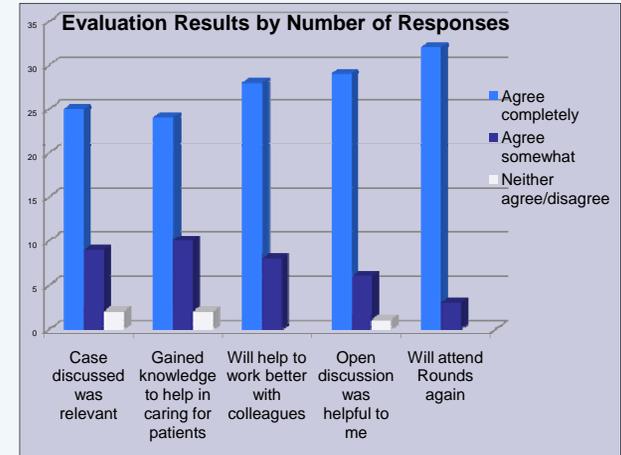
Schwartz Center Rounds provide a safe, comfortable environment for honest discussion about emotions surrounding our efforts to provide quality care in the face of difficult psychosocial patient issues.

Acknowledgements

Schwartz Center Rounds Planning Committee at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center/Penn State Hershey Cancer Institute:

Carol Tringali, MS, RN, AOCNS
 Henry Wagner, MD
 George F. Blackall, Psy.D., MBA
 Rev. Priscilla Denham, D.Min

Mark Stout, PA-C
 Melanie Comito, MD
 Mary Lander, RN
 Christine Hepler



Financial Acknowledgment
 The Schwartz Center Rounds® are provided with support from the Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare.