

Mission Accomplished at the Critical Moment

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Evaluations and inspections of hospitals require proper storage and handling of emergency medical supplies. The pharmaceutical department sets rules and regulations for the handling of special circumstances supplies. These

circumstances include large number of injuries, emergency disasters, explosion of wars, spreading of influenza, poisoning, and failure of procurement systems. For Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, the first challenge of our emergency pharmaceutical system was

the disaster relief efforts of the Nepal earthquake.

On Sunday, April 20, 2015, I received a phone call from Superintendent Chao of the hospital. He informed me that the Tzu Chi Nepal earthquake relief team was departing the following day. I immediately contacted my colleagues who were participating at certain events in Miaoli, to return to the hospital as soon as possible. At about 11:00 pm that evening, 1,000 kg of medicines and supplies were ready for shipment for the first relief team. (Our medical relief team consisted of nine echelons, with a total amount of 1,410 kg of medicines)

In addition, evaluations and inspections also require a smooth flow of medical supplies in the case of emergency. The Formosa Fun Coast explosion was a more critical test of our system.

The accident occurred on Saturday evening June 27, 2015. Soon after the news broke, our group leader, Lin Kuan-Ling rushed to the hospital from her living quarter to join the pharmacists on duty, Hsu Yueh-Hsin and Huang Ya-Wen helped collected about 400 kg of supplies, such as IV fluids and burn patient ointments. It is worthwhile to mention that the pharmacists themselves weighted only about 40 kg on average, but they

were handling supplies ten times their weight.

In fact, the message we received was that the medical team required more than 200 cans of scald cream, which was about a month's consumption of our normal usage. This was beyond our normal storage amount. What could we do?

The first thing we could think of was to ask for help from our network. We contacted Hualien, Taichung and Dalin Tzu Chi Hospitals, and also sent messages to other neighboring hospitals. Fortunately, large quantity of scald cream and albumin injection were offered from these hospitals.

The second thing we did was to go to the source of the supplies. Even though it was a Sunday, we still went through different channels to contact personnel of the pharmaceutical company. The factory is located in Yilan, Taiwan. It just happened that our pharmacist Yu Wei-Ju went back to Yilan that Sunday. With the help of the Yu's family and the factory personnel on duty, they borrowed a truck and moved the medicine to Wei Ju's house. This move was proven to be correct. If we didn't have the medicine earlier, by Monday all other hospitals would go to the same factory and fight for the same medicine.

My original plan was to leave the

truck load of supplies with Wei-Ju in Yilan for the weekend. However, by Sunday afternoon, I received phone calls from the hospital informing me that the stocked scald cream was exhausted. We had no choice but to bring back the supplies from Yilan. Thanks for the help of the general team leader Chang Li-Der and colleague Lin Quan-Wan, they volunteered to drive to Yilan to pick up the supplies. They were stopped by the highway patrol on the way back to Taipei because of traffic control. With the explanation that the supplies were for emergency relief for the victims, the patrol officer

released the truck. On Sunday evening, the health bureau of New Taipei city also collected certain amount of medicine and scald cream, so we could share a proper amount to join effort. By Monday morning, we were short of IV fluid. At 7 am in the morning our colleague Chang Wen-Chiang was sent to the factory in Shinjo to pick up 180 kg of IV fluids.

The third route was to get help from the government. The Ministry of Health and Welfare established a “Line” group especially for the supply of medicine and medical supplies for victims. Through this group, we



As the typhoon Chong Hon approaching, Pharmacist Chang Wen-Chian and colleague from the General Team were dispatched to Pharmaceutical factory in Yilan to pick up 200 cans of medicine.



Hsu Yueh-Hsin of the Pharmaceutical Department checked out the IV fluids and burn patient ointments, immediately after she was informed of the emergency.

informed the officials the amount of supplies we need. The Ministry then contacted the suppliers to increase supply. By Wednesday, we stocked up 3,287 cans or 16 different types of scalded cream from five manufacturers with six different brands. This is because no single manufacturer alone can provide the amount we needed.

After the initial critical period, the manufacturer caught up with demands. As we were welcoming the relief, on Thursday, 9th of July, the weather bureau issued a typhoon alert. Typhoon Chan-Hom was approaching and rain started to fall that evening. I received phone call from the Head of our

nursing department, Wu Chiu-Feng. The message was that our Betadine ointment would be exhausted by next morning. I was riding my motorcycle in the rain, sending my child home. Without hesitation, I stopped my bike under an arcade and called my colleagues to find solutions. Our pharmacist in charge of the medicine storage, Yu Wei-Ju, already had the first message. She rushed back to the hospital and made arrangement for the kids. We made many phone calls to several nearby hospitals. Unfortunately, none of them had the medicine. Eventually, we located a different brand name medicine at the Shin Kong Wu Ho-Su Memorial Hospital. Since we had the need the next morning, the General Affairs team dispatched a vehicle and brought Wei-Ju to Shin Kong Hospital to get the ointment, at nine in the evening.

The immediate problem was solved, but Wei and I must come up with a solution for the long run. We contacted the manufacturer in Taoyuan. But they told us flatly that they could not come up with what we need. Our last resort was then the same pharmaceutical factory in Yilan. They did produce Betadine Ointment with the same composition. We decided to borrow the medicine from them and pick them up the next morning.

At the time all the details were sorted out, my son joyfully announced that school was cancelled because of the typhoon. That news worried me because weather condition might shut down the Yilan pharmaceutical factory. Luckily, the Yilan factory was business as usual the following day. Before 7 am, Chang Wen-Chian of our medicine storage and Lin Quan-Wen from the general team were dispatched to Yilan to pick up the 200 cans of the loaned ointment.

Overall, through this episode of emergency medicine collection, we travelled about 300 kilometers and picked up about 2,400 kilograms of various medicines. Hospital evaluation

rules require that in case of emergency, three days of medical supplies must be available. From the Formosa Fun Coast explosion experience, we learned a way to keep our supply uninterrupted, even though we have to use up 30 days of normal consumption in a single day. This is what our management called “Mission Accomplished at the Critical Moment”. This is what we called responsibility. With our mission accomplished, we sincerely appreciate the seamless coordination from departments such as Resource Management Department, and General Team of the Hospital. Without their full hearted cooperation, our mission would not be accomplished so smoothly.



The first few days after the Formosa Fun Coast explosion, colleagues of our Pharmaceutical Department were required to check our inventory daily. Picture shows our dressing supplies on the fourth day after the incident.