

# The Strength of Saving a Life

**Tsai Fang-Ling, Vice Head Nurse, ER Department, Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital**

On February 4, 2015, with a light drizzle outside, a message popped up on my cellphone, “TransAsia Airways departing Songshan Airport heading Kingmen just crashed near the Nangang District and into the Keelung River.” After reading the message, my heart tugged; then I calmly informed the Director of Nursing of the crash in Taipei. We discussed the need for medical personnel to support the rescue operation. Suddenly, the Emergency Department Director, Yiang Giou-Teng, walked into the office, stating Taipei City Health Bureau just telephoned him regarding the Nangang crash, requesting every hospital with a trauma center to send a doctor and a nurse to the scene. Physician, Dr. Li Lin-Qi, was chosen but in need of a nurse. Aside from anything else, I told Director Yiang and our ER Head Nurse that I would go.



## Experienced in Emergency Operation, Volunteered to the Crashed Scene

Since I was involved with supporting the Taipei City Health Bureau in large scale activities and my daily work at the ER, I had prepared myself for such necessary emergency rescue operations. I immediately contacted the headquarters to request ambulances. After Director Yiang briefed to the Superintendent Chao of the hospital, he reminded us to report back upon arrival at the crash scene. We were on our way to as soon as the ambulance arrived.



The site was grueling and filled with sadness. After reporting to a control station, Dr. Li and I carried our first aid kits to standby at a designated area. The temperature was cold with light drizzle. However, the coldness of the body was incomparable to the mourning of our hearts. While standing by, I asked the fire department team whether or not there were survivors. They said all the survivors found were immediately sent to nearby hospitals. The time was about noon, and all the rescuers knew they reached a conundrum. The water gate at the site was too narrow for heavy machinery to pass through. We could only operate on man power. Soon after, we heard rescuers yelling the discovery of dead bodies. Military

personnel immediately brought them ashore. We were instructed to have the gurneys ready so the ice cold bodies can be brought ashore. Our first aid kits were completely useless at the moment.

### **Hospital Staff in Solidarity to Care for a Large Number of Injuries**

Already shocked by the Nangang air crash in February 2015, the Formosa Fun Coast Explosion incident happened in late June. All of a sudden, we were racing against time in the emergency rooms. At the time of the explosion, a large number of injured patients flooded the hospital. ER staff rushed in and out working tirelessly. Night shift staff worked overtime to assist the graveyard shift staff. Other nurses came in from their dormitories to help. All hospital managers and directors rushed immediately to the scene to fight alongside with other personnel. No one complained about the fatigue because we care about the victims - their physical and emotional injuries. Love made our hearts stronger in solidarity.

In recent years, many major natural or man-made disasters occurred worldwide, causing countless casualties; emergency personnel were often the first to respond at the scene. To be able to respond and operate in a catastrophic event is an essential capability. Natural disasters are unavoidable; therefore, as an ER worker, I must possess a high degree of vigilance for major challenges during a disaster and a surge in patients. Then respond accordingly in a systematic and organized manner.

The recurrent emergency rescue operations made me understand the impermanence of life. Accidents happen, life is unpredictable. We never know what will happen tomorrow. Those departed due to accidents taught me to seize the moment, cherish the family and friends; and provide those who are suffering to feel the sun and beauty of this world.

As I approach my 15th year working in the ER during the time, facing life and death constantly, I have evolved from a trembling new graduate to now calm medical personnel. People are very vulnerable with illness; meanwhile, the medical staffs are like diligent angels, alleviate their sorrow and pain. When patients cry for help, angels always appear to repel their sorrow, and fill their hearts with warmth and strength.