

# Heart to Heart in Lotus

**Dr. Ying-Wei Wang, Director of Palliative Care Ward, Tzu Chi Hospital, Hualien**

*“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is a progress, working together is a success, laughing together makes it worthwhile.”*

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These are the words of Lawrence Green, a famous social worker in community service, as written on the first page of his book. I quoted his words in one of my speeches to engage the audience. After the meeting, Professor Chantal Chao came to me with one phrase: “laughing and crying together makes it worthwhile.” I think it better represents the spirit of the workers in the hospital ward for the terminally ill patients. Those involved in this ward support each other in all the bittersweet times. Some times are as sweet as a lotus flower, while others are as bitter as the germ of the lotus seed. The good and the bad form the beauty of this special ward.

## Experience in Japan

Thirteen years ago, the Buddhist Tzu Chi General Hospital began the creation of a ward especially made for the terminally ill patients -- a place for their final departure, with dignity and in peace. At the beginning, Vice President Ms. Pi-Yu Lin, her staff and the people responsible for this project, traveled to Japan to learn how to build this type of specialty ward with all the necessary

software and hardware (infrastructure and the operations). During their stay, they were most impressed with the East Sapporo Hospital. Their equipment and facilities weren't very different from those of other hospitals. However, it was evident that the



**Dr. Ying-Wei Wang has been a leader of the Heart Lotus ward for many years. He often encourages the nurses and helps to find new ways to improve, create, and set new standards for medical treatments for patients.**

workers' care was based around patient needs, and the cooperative effort was incredible. The supervisor of their ward for terminally ill patients was not only the head nurse but also the vice president of the hospital. Every day the workers would hold a team meeting, and the nurse in charge of taking care of a patient had a say in whether the patient was ready to leave the hospital or not. This dedication helped improve the lives of the patients and their families.

### **A Different Approach to Treatment**

Terminally ill patients need high quality care more than anything else. This cannot be learned by traditional means or from textbooks. In preparation for the new ward in the Tzu Chi Hospital, an international conference was held to discuss care for terminally ill patients. Among those invited were representatives from Japan, England, and Singapore, all of whom were experienced nursing specialists. In the first few years of the hospital, they invited foreign medical experts and supervisors for assistance and advice. Some of the invitees included a specialist in Aromatherapy and another in Lymph edema therapy. Under their instruction and guidance, the nurses at the hospital quickly improved their quality of care. Every nurse eventually had their own specialty and assumed the role of a teacher to continue educating



Soothing a patient both body and soul is one of the main spirits in palliative care ward. Photo depicts Dr. Wang(left) and Dr. Kon assisted a patient to the Buddhist chapel to fulfill her wish to her Buddha, and Dr. Wang lent her his stethoscope to speak out for she lost her voice.

the other workers. The Tzu Chi Hospital is known for its method of educating its staff. Every morning, all the medical personnel gather for discussions on the mental and physical care of their patients. Their efforts of teamwork differentiate them from other hospitals.

Under the efforts of my co-workers, the Tzu Chi Hospital became the first to adopt this new approach for caring for terminally ill patients. The hospital is the first to introduce Aromatherapy and Lymph edema massaging. The hospital utilizes both eastern and western medicine, and

its service and teamwork are the first of its kind. All their achievements made in the medical field have set a standard for Taiwan. Every two years, there is a conference in Asia to discuss hospital wards for the terminally ill patients. The Tzu Chi Hospital' staff is never absent and contributes the highest percentage of people to attend every conference. Their achievements are also published in English journals so that the people who work with these hospital wards can appreciate and admire the Tzu Chi Hospital's work.

### **Cherish Every Moment**

Over a period of ten years, many nurses and staff members have left the

Tzu Chi Hospital. Some reasons include the completion of their training program, the need to transfer to other places, family reasons, or the inability to continue working if they, too, become terminally ill. As for me, I believe that the family we have created at the Tzu Chi Hospital has never left. No matter how long anything lasts, it will eventually come to an end. However, the feelings, friendships, and strength that kept us together will only get stronger. I really cherish the opportunity I've had to work with such great people, and I hope that we can cherish every moment and that the hospital ward for terminally ill patients will continue to grow.



Tzu Chi volunteers play a part in palliative care ward. Photo shows that two volunteers sisters send the patient to the air garden to feel the sunshine.

# Salute to All Nurses

**Dr. Chung-Chao Liang,  
Director of Rehabilitation Dept. and Secretary General, Tzu Chi Hospital, Hualien**

I frequently say to medical students, “If people need your service 24 hours a day, then it must be a well respected profession and it is a worthy cause.” The medical profession fits that description. Along with doctors, nurses are an indispensable part of the medical industry. A patient’s survival depends on the close partnership between doctors and nurses.

My interaction with the nursing staff is progressed in 4 different stages: intern, resident doctor, doctor, and administration.

At the very beginning, I looked up to the nurses who were like teachers with hands-on experiences. Twenty years ago there weren’t any artificial models or fake dummies to practice. On the first day of the internship, many found themselves busy with real patients who needed treatment and diagnosis. Although supervising instructors were available, they usually were busy with their own patients and didn’t often have time to show interns step-by-step. I greatly admired those nurses that were able to locate blood vessels just by touch, which was hard to master. Eventually, I learned from the nurses to do things such as setting up a RV drip or changing patients’ breathing tubes.

When I began my residency as a doctor, I became a partner with the nurses.

Together, we went around checking on patients’ vital signs, reviewing lab tests, bacteria cultures and prescriptions. We discussed each patient’s condition so as to tailor specific course of treatment and care.

After gaining the physician status I began to explore things on my own. I would allow students to observe while I was working. Nurses were my best helpers, for example, when I made the calls, nurses would be ready for the updated patients’ information and other relevant experts’ opinion. Sometimes, I would give a fairly simple order, but it would frequently cause the nurses to busy themselves for a long time. They even reported on the progress of our new interns. If it wasn’t these nurses, I would have been buried to do all the things that I needed done.

After 20 years hands-on with the patients, I became an administration executive. I am currently the secretary of the hospital and I oversee the nursing department. My role is reversed, but I treat the newly graduated nurses like my own daughters. Some of them felt homesick so I arranged volunteers to keep them company. These newly graduates throw themselves immediately into the line of duty, often facing the life-or-death situation. I am sympathetic to their challenge so I



Da Ai TV Station's medical programs, "Safeguard Life", are stories about doctors and patients at Tzu Chi hospitals. The program also arranges special interviews with nurses. Dr. Liang (right) is one of the hosts. He is always impressed with the nurses, and is a regular viewer of the program. In this picture, the first person on the left is Shu-Chuan Chang, the director of the Hualien nursing department.

requested management to be especially kind to them. They often work long hours with heavy workload, not to mention begin able to go home on time, so I encourage the management to streamline the operation to allow less paperwork for the nurses. I am attentive and mindful to the needs of these young nurses.

Sometimes, I think the nurses understand patients better than doctors or even the patients' own families. When my mother was hospitalized last year, I was proven to be right on my observation. I am grateful for their service with dedication. The following is a letter I wrote on September 1, 2008:



*Dear Nurses,*

*I am indebted to you all for accompanying my mother during her final days.*

*Today, I passed by a familiar spot on my way to work. Outside unit MICU-1, I couldn't help peeking at the location of bed number 20. It used to read "Liang Chen Yue Mi", but the name was no longer there.*

*My dear mother, I miss you so much.*

*Suddenly, I envied the nurses (Nurse.Xoao-Li, Ya-Ling, Jun-Hou, Wen-Cong, Qian-Hui, Gui-Fen, Xiao-Hui, Shu-Ling, Jia-Hui, Kai-Chun, Wan-Ru, Xin-Yu, Shi-Yi, Yan-Rong, Hui-Ci, Hui-Ting, Xue-Xian, Wan-Ru, Xin-Yu, Shi-Yi, Yan-Rong, Hui-Ci, Hui-Ting, Xue-Xian, Ya-Ling...) who worked here. During my mother's final three-week stay at MICU1, there were many opportunities for me to keep her accompanied but I failed to act. I kept thinking I could spend more time with her after she recovered. Who could have known, by the time I knew it, she was already gone.*

*Although things turned out the way it was, I would like to thank the nurses who, despite your busy schedules, were still able to make arrangement for my family to visit. I would also like to thank Director Han-Yu Huang and other doctors for sticking with us through the many ups and downs of my mother's illness. I learned from this that there is a limit in medicine that human lives can't stay on forever. I want to thank you all for making it possible for my mother to pass away peacefully. I am grateful to have your company and support for the difficult times. After all, your prayers and blessings comforted my heart and my family.*

*I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the volunteers, Master Cheng Yen's disciples, Superintendent Shyr, Nursing Director Shu-Chuan Chang, and other staff members, for your kind blessings.*

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working together is a success, laughing together makes it worthwhile."*

*Chung-Chao Liang*



# Well-being

**Dr. Yue-Yuan Lee, Obstetrics and Gynecology Dept., Tzu Chi Hospital, Taichung Branch**

The old saying about woman giving birth: “If it passes, a banquet is waiting; if it doesn’t, a funeral is ready instead.” Medics in the maternity care division are protecting two lives, the mother and the newborn, for every delivery. Obstetrics doctors standby 24 hours a day when needed and the delivery rooms are their family rooms. From my experience, the medics in the Obstetrics department are the best partners in life.

“Miss Nurse, how soon can I go to the delivery room?”

“Go Mother! Your cervix is already opened. Push. Push hard, the baby is

coming out.”

“Very good, hold your breath and push!”

These are frequently heard in the delivery rooms. The “White Angels” are anxious and sincere, treating the pregnant women as their families. And because of them, the babies delivered are all well and healthy.

Every time a new baby is born, its cries are full of emotion. I am touched by the birth of a new life, and thankful to the team who provides care along the way. When the staff brings a baby to the mother



| Dr. Lee, pictured in the center, find happiness around experienced staff.

for their first encounter outside of the mother's womb, the room is filled with joy, it warms my heart. I forget all the fatigue but immerse myself in the celebration of a new born with everyone in the room. People ask if I am tired of doing the delivery again and again. My answer is always, "I am blessed." I am blessed to be able to work with the team and deliver new lives. It is a wonderful feeling.

Pregnancy is an important event for both the mother and the family. As an Obstetrics doctor, my duty is not only the well being of the mother and newborn, but also the future of the family – their expectation, the blessing. The average length of employment for every member in this medical team is about 9 years. We have developed mutual trust and cooperation among ourselves and continue to build on our success. This group of "White Angels" is committed to excellent service and continuing improvement through discussion. It is just like Master Cheng Yen once said, "The happiest person is full of love."

In "Jing Si Aphorism," "To do what is needed, then life becomes meaningful."

I started learning this new meaning when I came to the Buddhist Tzu Chi General Hospital in Central Taiwan. I delivered its first baby, and then it reaches 100, and 200. It even includes my own daughter in the statistics.

These "White Angels" are the ambassadors to the new born families.



When a task is performed over and over again without feeling bored, it is called "Xing Fu (Happiness)!"

They care for the mothers in preparation for laboring. When the baby is born, they teach them how to breast feed. They even follow up with the new mothers after they are discharged from the hospital. The mobile baby bathing unit is their new invention. Their tireless effort in taking good care of their patients is highly respected. I am grateful to them.

Some people do their daily journal in language, some use photos. Our delivery room journal is authored by Yu-feng, head of nursing team, and her staff. This colorful journal is named "Xing Fu (Happiness)!"





## Excellent Angels in Surgical ICU

**Dr. Wen-Lin Fan, Director of Surgical Intensive Care Unit,  
Tzu Chi Hospital, Dalin Branch**

On May 12th 2008, the International Nurses Day, I joined the Tzu Chi family to undertake my current position in the surgical intensive care unit (ICU). I used to serve as an Anesthesiologist in another hospital, but Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Chin-Lon Lin invited me to become part of his team.

Inside the ICU, patients are battling for the lives under excruciating pain; whereas their families are waiting anxiously outside, often totally at a loss and not knowing what to do. Our goal is to make sure that patients receive the best possible care for speedy recovery, and their families can rest assured their loved ones are in good hands.

### **Communication Is to Build Bridges**

In order to improve the service quality and related medical knowledge, the ICU team conducts regular meetings, and participate in seminars to review and debate individual cases. Once a month, they invite other professionals for conferencing on the ICU service quality. Representatives from various departments, including Anesthesiologist Shu-Chun, Infection Control

Specialist Xiang-Ling, Nutritionist Jia-Wen, Social Worker Hui-Lin, Pulmonologist Jia-Mei, TPN (Total Parental Nutritionist) Xiu-Zhen, and all the nursing units' department heads take part in the debate and discussion. Their contribution increases the communication among various groups and improves the quality of service to patients.

In addition, informational sessions designed for the patients' families are hosted bimonthly by the "White Coats" (medics). Again, the idea is to build bridges so that the focus is on improving patients' experience so everyone is a winner. As Superintendent Dr. Shou-Hsin Chien once said, "To improve the quality of medical service, we need to innovate professional care with the human touch."



**Nurses in the ICU work relentlessly with patients whose families can set aside their worries.**

If we can foster coherent teamwork, support one another, learn from each other, and strive to create a harmonious environment, patients and their families are biggest winners.

### **Teamwork – Quality, Not Quantity**

There are many different tasks within the ICU. From the smaller tasks like turning the patients, or phlegm sucking, to bigger tasks such as after surgeries wounds care, and the changing of dressings, require teamwork and unconditional work ethics. Recently, there has been an increase in patients with myofasciitis (inflammation of muscle tissues) as a result of surgeries. Patients' after surgery care require coordination and team work. For instance, in an amputated patient's care, a nurse lifts the patient's amputated limb carefully so another nurse can remove the bandage; and while cleaning the wound, a nurse is busy preparing the medication and new dressing. The whole process can take from 4 to 6 hours. Everyone carries their weight to make the process smooth going. The most rewarding and touching moment comes when the patients connect with their families, the room is suddenly filled with a burst with joy. Voices of gratitude and thankfulness from patient and families are everywhere.

Jing Si Aphorism says, "Unity is a means to charity, Harmony comes with unconditional giving, Love is mutual respect



Dr. Wen-Lin Fan has confidence in providing quality service in the ICU department. His is thankful to every member of his team for their coordinated effort.

and admiration, Teamwork is to lend a helping hand." They really apply to the daily lives and I am so grateful to be able to contribute to the Tzu Chi world. Special thanks to Zhen-Hui and Xiu-Jing in the 1st and 2nd surgical patient wards, for their patience, love and leadership; and all the team members whose effort and determination in providing care is critical to support the doctors.

Master Cheng Yen said, "The mission of medicine is to combine humanity to save lives. If we are united, together, harmoniously, with love and teamwork, we create an environment that can provide quality care."

For over twenty years working in the medical field, from Anesthesiology to currently in the surgical ICU, the life threatening care requires a trustworthy team of medical professionals. I am indebted to them and grateful for their companionship.

# Novel Influenza, New Influence in Heart

**Dr. Yu-Huai Ho, Department of Infectious Diseases, Tzu Chi Hospital, Hualien**

From the point of view of an Infectious Disease doctor, the nursing team around me deserves much credit. Especially the Infection Control unit, composed of only four full-time nurses, is responsible for the entire hospital of 900 beds, and with about 700 medics' altogether. Hualien Tzu Chi General Hospital is the only medical research center in the eastern part of Taiwan. Its' importance to the society is the mission of all the Tzu Chi staff and volunteers.

According the Taiwan center of disease control tracking H1N1 virus, there is a ten fold increase in emergency flu related illness

this year relative to the previous year, one can estimate the work load of the front line emergency staff.

For the past six months, flu disease ran rampant, and the media was too eager to spread the fear without verifying the accuracy of the facts and information. The mission of the Infection Control unit is to update the staff and volunteers with the latest information about the disease and to monitor its spread. The unit also hosts seminars about the flu and prevention, and conducts disaster planning with all the responsible departments for an outbreak.

Internally, it handles inquires from patients, staff and volunteers. Externally, it also serves as a coordination center with the government public health service. The two telephones in the unit's office are always busy. The shredder dies as a result of overload. The sudden increase in work load severely stains everyone. Perhaps it is a test of a person's will, or perhaps a way to immunize against pressure.

Hui-Li, who just returns from a maternity leave, immediately throws herself into the unit's taskforce. Shu-Ping, who is due for maternity leave in a few weeks, braces herself for the danger of infection to continue her work. Pregnant women are



The Infection Control unit works diligently to control infectious disease in the hospital. Dr. Yu-Huai Ho (second from the left), poses with the unit.

among the high risk groups in contracting the H1N1 virus. Yu-Zhen, the team leader, takes care of all the emergency related matters including conferences scheduling, and can still assemble all the materials in the shortest possible time for the meetings. The only single Zhen-Hui is always the last one to turnoff all the lights before leaving the office.

The unit has been extremely busy and the moral is high. Dr. Jen-Chih Lee, Director of Tuberculosis Studies in Eastern Taiwan (a consortium of six major hospitals), and Dr. Li-Shinn Wang, Vice Superintendent of Tzu Chi Hospital, are the top commanders of the unit. Doctors and nurses are challenged during the epidemics and they are exhausted, but they never complain because they have the support of the Tzu Chi families. They find their strength in spiritual world of Tzu Chi. Master Cheng Yen said, "Be thankful for the difficult challenge. It is an opportunity to practice courage and persistence."

Working as a doctor in the Infectious Diseases Department for Children, I am grateful for the all other medical professionals helping to fight the epidemics. The first wave of H1N1 infected victims experience severe vomiting, and have to be put on intravenous medication. The virus is highly infectious and the children lack of persistent self control, like hand washing and using face mask, make the matter worse. Many nurses were infected and had to stay home. At one time, there were



**The prevention of new strain flu virus is a critical part the Infection Control unit. Infection control specialist Yu-Zhen reminds her peers the important steps to fight infectious disease in the hospital.**

a total of nine new nurses coming from other departments to fill in the shortage. The head of the nursing department was called on assisting the new staff to fight the disease. She became a key member of the nursing team in fighting the "Influenza A" virus infection.

Everyone follows the procedures for isolating the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) infected patients to control the spread of the virus, and to protect others and yourself from the infection. The unit looks at every unturned stone to keep the virus at bay. SARS broke out in the "He Ping" hospital and the death of a doctor really taught us a lesson. SARS can break out often in the mostly neglected corners, like the laundry room. I sincerely hope in the Tzu Chi world, there will never be the starting place for the virus.