

| Special Report |

Know Your Neighbors

– Community-based Nursing



Into the 21st century, medicine is becoming more specialized and nursing is no exception. While the global medical community is advocating preventive medicine over treatment, the Tzu Chi nursing team is taking the lead to practice in their local communities.

Community nurses and hygienists regularly visit the neighboring communities to conduct health seminars. A network of physical therapists, home care specialists, and recovery specialists are teamed together to provide a complete care package providing not just hospital but also at-home services as well.

Even inside the clinics, services are being extended to cover families and as a precaution their neighborhoods to prevent any epidemic.

Community based nursing promotes interaction with people related to their health. Nurses play the role of health adviser in the community, befriend and interact with a wide spectrum of people from all walks of life.

Compassion and empathy are learned from real contact with patients. When they return to the offices they become more motivated and aware of their patients need.

Community based nursing breaks down the segregation between hospital and community. Are we ready for the new challenge?

Educating the Community for a Healthy Lifestyle

Chien-Hsiang Cheng, Community Health Center, Tzu Chi Hospital, Taichung Branch

In community based nursing, nurses are responsible for the health of every individual without regards to the status of being a patient in the hospital or the community.

Preventive Medicine – Medical Screening

When I teach patients how to perform routine at-home care, I always inquire how they found out about their own illness. When I heard one saying, “I found out about my illness because of Tzu Chi medical pre-screening in my community,” which was very satisfying. It is worth the effort and hard work we invested in each community.

Two years ago, we only had three staffers occupying a small mobile office to conduct hundreds of community screening. Gradually, the program gained recognition and support among hospitals and the local community. Now the community screening program involves an entire hospital’s resource planning, and the program itself has evolved from a general physical examination to an integrated and complex health examination.



Motivated and Assertive – Multi-tasking and Efficient

One day I was using an ATM machine in the hospital cafeteria, I noticed a job posting for a health instructor. The job description and qualification requirements were similar to my experience. Having had four years of clinical experience but unclear about health instructing, I applied for the position anyway. During an interview the hiring manager asked about the characteristics of a modern woman. I was surprised by the question irrelevancy to the position. Nonetheless, I still gave it some thought and my answer was: “Modern women ought to be persistent, proactive, and highly motivated.” Who would have thought those characteristics would become my “fate”, since then, I have been working in the community and away from the hospital.

Community medicine emphasizes preventive measure rather than cure. Its customers include individuals and families, groups and communities. Working in communities near a hospital, we seemingly need to be skillful in all areas. The type of work meets



The nursing care specialist is a key member in the community health care program. They can be seen in regular health screening activities and health education seminars throughout the communities, at schools, in traditional markets, and in temples.



the characteristics of a modern woman. However, because of the multi-disciplinary nature of our work, it is hard for people to comprehend. When friends and relatives learn about my profession, their instinct is to ask about my specialty. After listening to my description, their most common reaction is: "Oh! I know. Isn't it just like those attending to patients' blood pressure at the postal office entrance?" I often feel discouraged by their demeaning comments. However, from another perspective, this is also a way to promote public health awareness. I always reply, "Exactly! Not only at the post office, but also at the farmers market, churches, and....."

In addition to individual case management, our job includes supporting community activities and providing health advice. At the beginning, the work load seems to be overwhelming. After some adaptation and adjustment, I gradually fell in love with the job, working with colleagues to organize community events, teaching public health awareness, and conducting early screenings. It is much more meaningful than waiting for patients to come to the hospital.

Neighbors Smile Happily with the Community-based Nursing

My most memorable experience is a planned visit to an unmarked and unnamed location – a temple. We collaborated

with the government health department to conduct a health screening at a newly opened temple. When asked about the address and location, nobody was able to provide the exact location. I was baffled until the day of the visit. It turns out the temple was built on the roadside next to a rice field. It really doesn't have a street number, a street name, or a road sign. Worst of all, there was no electricity on site. Without electricity, even the best equipment is rendered useless. Eventually, we had to go door-to-door for assistance, despite guard dogs howling and barking at us. We were really thankful to our volunteers, and the neighbors who were eager to help with extension cords and power supplies. Our mission was accomplished.

The last two years of community work was really hard work -- sweating in the hot summer days, freezing cold in the winter times, and overcoming the fear of speaking on stage. What is the source of energy to keep us going? I think it is the smiles and the look when people are grateful for our service.

If I were to start all over again, I would still choose to be a community nurse, a "modern woman." The experience enriched my life, and let me appreciate more of the joy and happiness of helping people. I will continue to give the opportunity to serve the community.

Filial Virtue

Around the Neighborhood

Hui-Yun Fu, RN, Obstetric Ward,
Tzu Chi Hospital, Taichung Branch

With the advance in modern medicine, the scope of nursing care is broadened from the mere treatment of diseases to preventative medicine such as preventive healthcare and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Smoking is one good example; we all know smoking increases the risk of lung cancer. Information about its danger and the various methods to help rid of the bad habit are now available everywhere. Throughout the county of Taichung, it is fairly common to spot nurses in hospital mobile teams as they cruise around the communities.

Newborn's Instinct to Suck – A Touching Moment in the Delivery Room

Having been in maternity nursing care for quite some time, my life is blessed with joy in welcoming the newborns. Since coming to Taichung branch of Tzu Chi Hospital, I have advanced my professional nursing to a different level. For example, we now follow the policy to ensure that newborns and their mothers have complete body contact, bare skin. After we cut the umbilical cord, we clean the baby, still crying, and nurture the baby in the mothers' bare hands. The baby would then calm down and follow its instinct to suck its finger, the scent of the mother's body eventually lead the baby to feed on the mother's milk. It is that touching moment signifying the beginning of a new life, many parents are tearful for the immediate happy moment. That is a perfect ending for of our job.

At-home Nursing Service – Tips for Breast Feeding

Our service extends to the local community. We made follow-up phone calls to the newborn mothers to understand their recovery progress and to answer questions on breast feeding. We even visit the families to provide at-home nursing services when the mothers have questions that can't be resolved over the phone. Nursing personnel in the maternity ward not only can deliver baby, but can also provide expertise and assistance over the phone, furthermore, they offer personalized at-home nursing service in the community.

Breast-feeding isn't easy. There was a new mother who was about to give up as a result of the pain in breast-feeding. The Head Nurse and I were really concerned about her situation so we decided to pay her a visit. During the home visit, we realized her difficulties so she recommended to her with different baby-feeding postures and techniques. Over the next few days, we called to follow up and gladly learned this mother overcame all difficulties and had gone back to breast-feeding again. With many other similar successful cases, our nursing care personnel have nurtured a close relationship with the mothers. Some of the mothers have become volunteers to help many other mothers to breast feed because of their successful experience. They truly feel that breast milk is the most natural food for human infants.

Preventive Medicine – Nursing Care for the Community

“Preventive Medicine” is the foremost concern for our hospital. The hospital teams up with government health departments regularly to conduct various medical related activities. One common activity is to give flu shots to young children at schools.

It is quite heart warming to watch those children, naive and innocently brave, rolling up their sleeves for the shots. When it is finished, they politely thank our nursing staff. Under the detailed plan of or community care, many people nowadays receive medical screening for various diseases. An example is the common cervix cancer smear test, which identifies positively tested women for further testing and consultation at the hospitals. Hence,



the spirit of “Early Diagnosing, Early Treatment” is carried out accordingly.

The nursing care personnel are the first line of defense, but also the last line of defense within the system. Its’ service has extended from within the hospital to include the family, and the community. The roles of nursing specialist include educating the public for healthy lives, to provide personalized health care to patients, and to assist doctors to delivering health services, not to mention the at-home nursing care for needy patients. The love of our nursing care has reached every corner of our communities.

From the delivery of newborn babies, to support breast-feeding nursing care, a new generation of quality care is taking place in the society.



By extending the nursing care to the newborn's own home, such as giving instructions on baby care and breast feeding, the newborns and their whole family are benefited for the quality care service.





Pass Love Forward

Pei-Heng Chiang, RN, ICU, Tzu Chi Hospital, Dalin Branch

A special occasion leads me into the Tzu Chi family to learn to love others while doing what I do best in my profession – nursing in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

Working in the ICU for over six years, I have seen enough about life's impermanence; life and death are separated by an instance. Just because love is not an easy word to say is not an excuse not to do it. We need to take every opportunity to say it, and to give to everyone around us.



Nurse Pei-Heng Jiang works at the ICU. An unplanned activity to do house call opens a new door in her career, an opportunity to learn to understand love.

Community Outreach – Nurses Illuminate the Light of the Heart

Last year on the International Nursing Day, I was anxious to participate in the lighting of the “Lotus Light” (Light of the Heart) program. On the day we gathered around, I found out the program was changed to “Community Outreach” instead. I was perplexed and could not figure out why. Finally, I joined the group, including Dr. Chung-Yi Lin, with a little bit of fear and anxiety not knowing what to expect.

Before arrival at the destination, I was briefed on the case history of three separate families. I felt at ease and was able to settle down.

The first family’s patient is a stroke victim who has limited mobility. We bring well wishes and love to the family, and encourage the victim to think positively -- “Be content and thankful.” He is moved and promises to do everything he can to help, like going to the recycling station to volunteer.

The second family is an old man living alone in a simple and indiscrete quarter. He is in poor health and does not take his medicine seriously, and eats whenever he wishes. He is also pessimistic and has given up hope on living. Dr. Lin approaches him with a sincere motherly tone. Soon after, he senses that we are treating him like a family member and he is touched and starts crying. We stay with him and accompany him while he heartily enjoys the hot meal that we have brought him. He even promises to

The last family is an old couple, a seventy-two year old taking care of his fifty-eight year old wife suffering from a stroke. The husband is exhausted taking care of his bedridden wife all by himself. Everyday, he turns her, cleans her, bathes her, and feeds her. He is thankful for the Tzu Chi volunteers’ visit. He doesn’t feel lonely because he has friends like us. He looks very upbeat and is very talkative. Our visiting has given him strength and he treasures the opportunity for the time he has with

his wife. He waves at us as he sees us off. I turn back from the moving automobile, only to find he is wiping off tears, it saddens me.

Spreading Love in the Community

A year has passed since the last community outreach. The images of those families keep flashing back in my mind, as if to remind me to share their stories with my peers. On this International Nursing Day, we celebrate with candles to light up the hearts of many with compassion, kindness, sincerity and giving.

Everyday, I interact with patients and families in the hospital but it is not the only environment where nurses can affect others. Through the community outreach and home visit, the sick and the weakened that can't go to the hospital can receive care and most importantly, with love. Going beyond the hospital environment allows me to experience how much love is needed in many of these families. It is the feeling of warmth that is most needed in human interaction. I will remember what I learned and apply that to my patients.

I feel the joy and the touching moment because the outreach experience is planted deep inside me. Everyday at 8:30 in the morning, a song called "Pay It Forward" is played throughout the hospital broadcasting system, followed by the remarks "provided by the outpatient services of the hospital." It reminds me of the experience I had with the outreach volunteers.

The community outreach program at the Tzu Chi Buddhist General Hospital Dalin Branch includes house calls, medical examinations, and disease screening. Nurses are encouraged to participate to visit the families who are most often poor, disadvantaged and in need of help. Every medical professional can do more, besides their regular routine job, like visiting the poor and the needy. Only by observing and doing it yourself, can you understand the meaning of love and how important it is to "Pay It Forward", just like the song itself, to illuminate the dark corners in this world, as well as the world within us.

100% Luck Index

Fu-Ming Chiang, RN, Community Health Center,
Tzu Chi Hospital, Hualien

“If there were a machine to measure job satisfaction index in this world, my score would be one hundred percent!” “Hello! I am a home care specialist, and I love my job!”

Hospice Home Care for Patients and Their Families

Since the era of Florence Nightingale, “helping the wounded” is the essence of nursing. Modern day hospitals are established to meet the demand of patients, and home-based nursing professionals are designed to provide continuous care for needy patients at their own homes. Many wonder about the duties of the home care specialists. Some think they are the “Three tubes (N-G tube, tracheal tube, and



Fu-Ming Chiang, home care specialist, thinks “family care” is probably more descriptive of what she does. Photo shows Chiang with her patient and a student nurse.

folly catheter) specialist”, the equivalent of hospice care specialist who records patients’ vital signs, change their life sustaining tubes, and follow a boiler plate medical routine. I am fortunate to be called on to perform such duties, and I can share my experience as a home care specialist even when I am a newcomer to this field.

The Professional “Nanny”

Home care Nursing began in the eighteen century but then was introduced to Taiwan in 1987. It became part of the government run total health care system in 1995. Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital incorporated this new service in 1990, providing much needed care to patients in the city of Hualien.

Some doctors call us the “professional nannies in the community.” After a few visits to a patient’s family, we master a complete assessment plan based on an individual patient’s needs. We work just like nannies, who do grocery shopping from door to door, market to market. We procure equipment and resources, and decide on the best course of action for the patient. If the patient’s family has financial difficulties, in securing necessary medical equipment, we will network with hospitals or vendors to evaluate affordable alternatives. One time there was a family whose members lacked the ability to maintain a healthy environment for the patient. With the help of our Tzu Chi volunteers, we cleaned up the home to make it inhabitable; and then followed up with the social services for their long-term survival plan. Such effort and planning is to ensure patients can receive quality care, even in their most difficult times.

Home Care Specialist

Sometimes, the nickname of a “Home Care Specialist” matches the description of what we do. We not only care for the patient, but also care for the family members as well. The latter is important because they are the primary providers of around the clock at-home service for the patient. There is an indirect link between the quality of a patient’s care and the health of the family members. During each visit, we assess the patient’s overall health condition, the changing of tubes, and an open but sincere



As a member in Community Health Center in Hualien, besides nursing profession, one has to show her/his various talents such as an exercise coach in any community activities.

communication with the members of the family. Developing trust is essential to long term care and every family and patient, is different in terms of need and special care. We learn from every opportunity when in contact with each member of the family.

Be positive on Homecare for the Darkest Days Are Gone

It's almost a year since the author became a Home Care Specialist. It has been both challenging and rewarding, and very different as compared to nursing in the emergency room.

Challenging in terms of the different requirements when it comes to overcoming roadblocks in the community. I am a novice when it comes to navigating in a big city, finding the address or apartment number is like walking within a maze; a wrong turn could cost you not only time but frustration. In many instances, I was lost but was able to make it to the destination, thanks to helpful taxi drivers, even when I was really late. The second most horrifying thing was to lead a crowd in aerobics dancing since I have no music talent. Now, I am used to being stared at, breaking the ice, or coming up with some innovative ideas for the patients and their families.

I always think nursing is challenging and fun. How many job opportunities allow you to experience and understand the life history of the people you serve, right in front of you? The patient before me has had a brilliant life at the time I was a toddler. Think of what they have done and accomplished in their lifetime. Then one can sympathize with the fact that the life curtain is about to close on them. We will never have time to walk their walk, or talk their talk, except the opportunity to accompany them to the finish line, with respect, dignity and love.