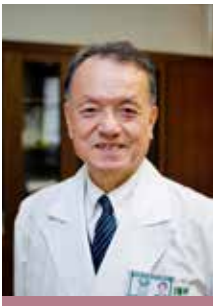


Kindness and Beauty of Tzu Chi Nursing

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The purpose of our medical care is to provide all people who participated, including patients, families, physicians, nurses, technologists and volunteers, a rewarding experience and a comfortable, hospitable, and happy place for sharing and learning.

Master Yin Shun told us “to cleanse our minds and serve others,” and that “All Buddha would not come from the deva realm, but from the human realm.” Therefore, hospitals are not only for specialized professional services, but also a place for spiritual cultivation. Everyday we see people suffering and realize how fortunate we are.

When the tsunami hit Sri Lanka in 2004, houses suddenly became rubble. Surprisingly, there was a Buddha shrine that remained intact. I thought it exemplified the infinite power of Buddha; however, Master Cheng Yen told us that true Buddhism teaches us not just to care about ourselves, but to serve others!

In the hospital, every moment was critical as doctors and nurses worked to rescue lives. But beyond the treatment, we would ask ourselves: Did we deliver genuine care and love to our patients? Are we following Tzu Chi’s spirit for medicine and humanity? One of my recent memory is about the medical team that took care of the conjoined twin sisters from the Philippines. We gave them the nickname, the Rose Twins. During the operation, two teams of anesthesia, cosmetic and pediatric surgeons worked together to finally separate the conjoined twins. From March when the process began until October, 2010, when the twins left the hospital, there were about thirty medical team members involved in their medical care. During the farewell party, the two nurses who had been taking care of the twins followed them as closely as if they were their mothers. These nurses had established very close relationships with the twins and were reluctant to see them leave.

Behind the story of the conjoined twin sisters is the relay of Tzu Chi.

The Rose Twin sisters received a warm welcome from the Philippines. Among the people who welcomed them were the previous conjoined twins, Lea and Rachel, who went through a similar surgery in 2003 at Tzu Chi Hospital. Lea and Rachel were referred to Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital by the Tzu Chi volunteers in the Philippines. The Tzu Chi volunteers took them to Taiwan, helped them through their daily lives, and accompanied them throughout the surgery. We were fortunate to have those volunteers to take a good care of our patients. This represented a continual, complete, and comprehensive care that we deliver. The Diamond Sutra quotes "the Tathāgata teaches that tiny particles are not tiny particles. Therefore they are called tiny particles. The Tathāgata teaches that worlds are not worlds. Therefore they are called worlds." Therefore, we may say "Medicine is not medicine. Therefore, it is called medicine," "Nursing is not nursing. Therefore, it is called nursing." As the nursing professionals at Tzu Chi, we often do things beyond just nursing, we not only provide nursing care, but also help with Tzu Chi disaster rescue efforts. During the August 8th flooding in 2009, our medical care team followed the volunteers to the heavily flooded areas to deliver first aid kits in the mud, and even enlisted the help of bulldozers when normal vehicles could not get through the mud slides. To feed the victims, our doctors and nurses helped prepare and distributed food. Such work is "not medicine" and "not nursing." Yet, it achieved the same goal in relieving pain for people who suffer.

There are a great variety of opportunities within the Tzu Chi medical service to do things beyond medicine. Taking the Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital as an example, the doctors, nurses, medical technicians, and dieticians have been involved in a spectrum of services ranging from free clinics to environmental protection, and even organic gardening and stage performances. Five years ago, I led a group performing the sign language show on - "Twelve Vows of the Sutra of Medicine." We also did a tour around Taiwan on the musical and sign language show "Sutra of Innumerable Meanings." We spent all our free time practicing over and over again; just like what it says in the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, "the innumerable meanings originate from one law."

The volunteers at the hospital show their Tzu Chi spirit whenever possible. When a food poisoning outbreak happened at a nearby school,



The conjoined baby twins from the Philippines before operation in mid 2010. The right photo depicts the celebration party the hospital holds for their coming home, the nurses who have been taking care of the twins are invited, the one with a microphone is the nursing dept. director Shu-Chuan Chang. Behind the story of the twins is the relay of Tzu Chi.



our volunteers came to comfort and took care of the kids before their parents arrived. It is a blessing that our medical team could provide the medical care and be part of the activities. No matter what kind of disaster, we try our best to help by selling organic vegetables at the hospital lobby for fund raising, distributing free food, and collecting donations for disaster relief. We even go out to the patients' houses if they need help cleaning their rooms. Although these activities are not part of medical care, we feel they are pivotal and rewarding. There was one memorable event when I went to Vietnam for the free clinic service. I remember it was a woman dressed in green. She is Vietnam's "mother heroine" because her husband and two sons died in battle during the Vietnam War. She gave her family to the country. The mother heroine was touched by our service even though we were just treating her for a minor flu.

It has been 16 years since I came back to Taiwan. Every day I experience gratitude and happiness. It is a blessing that I can be part of Tzu Chi.

Tzu Chi medical culture is "exemplifying humanity and making history." Tzu Chi nursing care is the same. The kindness and beauty of nursing can be achieved by acting with our hearts.