



Written by Shang-Feng Sun, Registered Nurse, ICU, Taipei Tzu Chi General Hospital

# The Glowing Halo

## **The dreadful experience of medical room**

Clang! Clang! Clang! The sound of a bell echoed in the hallway. A reckless child was jostling his way around and trembling with goose bumps as he observed the blood oozing out of the wound on his foot. He braced himself and unwillingly dragged his feet into the school medical room – a place more horrifying than the haunted girls' restroom. The boy endured the pain and tears, and then hobbled slowly into the cold and windy medical room. Before the boy had a chance to speak up, the school nurse yelled, "Oh! What have you done? Why are you injured again? You are so mischievous and reckless!" Soon afterward, a liquid medicine that caused excruciating pain was applied to the wound. Cotton swabs were smeared brutally around the blistering cut and emitted the hissing sound. The little boy waited patiently for the nurse to tell him "Go back to your classroom!"

As the little boy in this anecdote, I had always hated to go the school nurse. I didn't understand why the nurse was always mean and daunting, and the memory was full of agonizing pains and frightful blames.

## **My first encounter with nursing**

One time, the students in our grade suffered from food poisoning and competed for washroom cubicles. We were all escorted to the emergency room in the hospital. I held a plastic bag that was full of half-digested food and gastric acid. As I observed an eye-full of busy nurses, a sense of thrilling chill was sent from the top

of my head down to my feet. The scene made my stomach churned again as I vomited again into the already-full plastic bag. The saddest part is, the vomit spilled over onto the floor! At that moment, I thought I was going to be a dead man. The nurse would humiliate me right there. Then, a nurse found me trembling and came to me. She patiently helped me to wipe the vomit on my body. And then she comforted me and said, "You are not feeling too well? Don't worry. You will feel much better after I give you a shot later. There will be no pain at all." Although I found out later that she wasn't telling me the whole truth about the shot, but I noticed a radiant rim of light, like a halo, glowing behind the nurse. I felt her compassion and warmth. It was there and then, at that young age, I finally realized that not all nurses are like demons.

## **Embark on the journey to pursue the halo**

After the high school graduation examination, I abruptly noticed that the nursing major was among the available options I could select for my college study. My thought traveled back to that warm halo. So I chose nursing as my major without any hesitation and smoothly stepped into the nursing field. I started off with making beds and then giving injections to patients. Step by step I had learned and acquired the knowledge and skills a professional nurse would possess. I remember the instructor taught us that, "Nursing is a branch of science as well as art. Since the object of nursing is people, it is not difficult to be a top-notch nurse, but it's not easy to be a fine nurse."



From being a top-notch nurse to a fine nurse, Shang-Feng Sun has experienced the entire process of this transformation. Even when he is busy with day-to-day nursing tasks, he still pays attention to patients' condition. This ultimately brings out the peace of mind to nursing professionals.



At that time, I unknowingly nodded my head in agreement like everyone else did. I couldn't distinguish the difference between a top-notch and a fine nurse. But I was determined to become a top-notch nurse.

### **My first introduction to a patient**

I can vaguely remember the first day of my intern at the hospital. I put on a nurse's uniform while still rehearsing the nursing skills in my brain. The senior staff instructed me to introduce myself and feed a patient. I walked into the ward to find a feeble man who suffered from liver cancer. He laid on the bed, squinted his eyes and then stared at me.

"How are you, sir? I am a student of nursing major and I am the intern to take care of you today. You may ask me for anything. If I can't do it, then I will ask the senior staff for help. May I feed some gruel to you?"

I recited those lines without a hitch. The man quickly and properly responded, "Who are you? I don't want to eat. Buzz off!"

All of a sudden, the words sent icy chills to the atmosphere. My hand with the spoon was trembling a bit in the air. I broke silence at last, "Sir, you have not eaten all day long. Would you have just a little bit?"

He answered, "Just go away! Don't you understand?"

### **One spoonful after another**

An elderly lady nearby came to the rescue and said, "He means well. Don't be so mean to him."

The conversation lasted for ten minutes and ended in me been spit in the face. I bolted out the ward like a puppy that took the wind out of sails. The senior staff heard my story then grinned a little bit. She brought me back to the ward, and then started to clean the man up while singing songs to appease him. One spoonful after another, he had eaten a half bowl of gruel. At that moment, I saw the familiar halo again. It was so bright! This had planted the seed for me to become a future nurse.

### **Become a top-notch nurse**

After my graduation from the school, I became a formal nursing staff to work in the clinical practice. The workload was exhausting. My mother always asked, "Why did you have to leave at six in the morning and return home at nine in the evening? Where did you go?" She would never believe that I didn't have enough time to finish my job, even if I skipped lunch and refrained from going to the restroom. In order to gain trust from my mother and avoid tongue-lashing from the senior staff, I zeroed in on learning and growing to elevate my capabilities. I had grown more efficient in my tasks, and I didn't have to work as much overtime as before. I was a



Shang-Feng Sun tells his impression of nurses from a child's view with a jolly and comical flair. Telling the nurse from a male's point of view, he unveils the dedication and attentiveness of the nursing staff, and that there is always a warm halo behind their back

rookie then but now I am a veteran. It was fair to say that I was a top-notch nurse then. Nevertheless, something seemed to be missing on those days when I returned home on time.

### **What it feels like to be a fine nurse**

One day, I was sorting out a patient's tube connections. She had been through a surgery to treat her breast cancer. Suddenly she reached out and held my hand and started to express her grief. She was worried about not being able to take care of her kids, not having enough money for medical treatment, and she was worried about her husband too. I wanted to withdraw my hand but her teardrops kept falling on it. I sat quietly next to her on the bedside and listened to her story. As she stroked her daughters' hair, we both shed some tears. She said to me, "You are the best nurse I've ever met."

Even though I took off rather late that night, but I felt that my heart was filled with inspiration. I didn't give her a shot nor a

bath. I didn't do anything but just listen to her and be her company. Perhaps what patients desire the most is not a well-known doctor, but a good listener to comfort them. Based on the current heavy workload on nurses, there isn't even enough time to go to the restrooms. How could I play a role to be a good listener? Unless one never gets off from this job! As I dwelled upon what my teacher told us in class, I decided at that instant that I want to be a fine nurse. So I walk into wards to chat with patients or their relatives every day after my regular work is done. In spite of being teased at times, I go home with a very joyful heart.

Many years have passed by since I first worked at the clinics. Sometimes, it is really demanding physically and mentally. Every time I feel like slacking off on the job, my teacher's reminder comes up, "Be a fine nurse!"

In *Harry Potter*, the Headmaster Dumbledore said to Potter, "And you will know, what is right and what is easy." We have to remind ourselves to "do the right thing" when there are many options to choose from. Although nurses in Taiwan are overwhelmed with assignments, I still encourage myself to always be blessed with that halo, so it can hearten many people.