

A Burn Mark That Blossoms

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Once a burn victim herself, Neurology Nurse Practitioner Chiu Hsin-Ling shares her experience.

I was a burn victim by accident in my childhood. The treatment and rehabilitation were toilsome. At times, the pain from scar contracture would turn me away from daily therapy. Fortunately, my mother was always there for my company and to help me live my new life. I was grateful to the medical staff for their meticulous care; so I resolved to save other's life. I am now a member of the medical professionals.

I was on vacation outside of Taiwan at the time of Formosa Fun Coast Water Park incident. The news took me back to my own memories. I can totally relate to the pain and struggle these victims have to endure. More than just physical suffering, it would be an everlasting emotional trauma. Formidable challenges were crushing down on not only the victims but also their families and friends, if the victims were lucky enough to live. I was compelled to step forward and use my own experience to hopefully hearten victims and their families.

Since returning to work on June 30th, 2015, I visited the ICUs in my off-hours and shared my firsthand experience with families to calm their nerves. I told them I am a veteran nurse, "Although the wounds are painful, one should enlist rehabilitation specialists at the very beginning to help ease the recovery, things like positioning and contracture exercises to de-scar. The body and physical functions will recover better." Areas such as joints and thickened skin are more difficult to heal



so they are limper. A rehab specialist will provide the best assistance to suit each individual's different needs. The scars are less sensitive to temperature so patients should stay in a cool environment and to avoid injury. These were some of the rehab experiences that I shared with the victims and their families. The hardship can only be comprehended if one is in their situation. I am grateful that I am able to give back to my community and to help those in need with my own experience.

These young victims often cried about their physical pain and grieved the emotional scar. I told them, "It's ok to let them all out. But you still need to deal with the reality afterward. Do you want your family to worry about you?"

They responded contentedly, "No, I don't want Mom and Dad to worry. I will make a fast recovery!"

For those who were distraught by their altered appearances, I consoled them that we would all get old and become unattractive, they just had their turn earlier. I answered their questions, including how the scars would look like, how to wear a compress suit, and would rehab be painful, etc. I rolled up my sleeves to demonstrate each rehab movement so that their families would be mindful of the needed assistance. I even set up an online group for everyone to share information and be each other's moral support.

As soon as patients were able to raise their hands or feet, I immediately



Chiu Hsin-Ling visits victims in her off-duty hours to boost the morale.

gave them applause.

“Today’s toil paves way for tomorrow’s success. Being laid back now is merciless to the future. Take one more step every day and the goal will soon be reached.”

My mother said I was only able to somewhat move my fingers when I was just transferred out of the ward. After a long and hard rehab journey, I now function completely as normal. I was an all star cheerleader in my school days. This year I even ran a 21-kilometer half-marathon and completed a triathlon. After hearing my “medal decorated” life stories, some patients promised to do

triathlon, some wanted to train to regain their shapes, and one even planned to race-climb Taipei 101. It was my hope that my story could bring faith and courage to the burn victims.

The sufferings that burn patients go through during treatment and rehab are indescribable. It is plain painful. My burn marks are one of a kind. They proved that even accidents can make possible a wonderful life and a meaningful existence. I will continue making rounds between hospital rooms to help whoever is in need, whether they are in the hospital or discharged.