

To Render a Salute to Nurses

Dr. You-Chen Chao, Superintendent, Taipei Tzu Chi General Hospital



A nurse is not only the foundation of a hospital, but also a patient's guardian. A doctor may play the role of decision maker or a medical team leader. However, providing comfort, medical care, and around the clock service are the tasks of nurses.

Nurses in white uniforms, always with smiles on their faces and busy shuttling between different corners, are typical in the Tzu Chi hospital. Professionalism and a display of loving care toward patients are the two most effective tools to ease patient's anxiety and worry.

Throughout my internship, I had great experiences with the nurse staff. During my internship in Taipei, I often asked the nurses on duty to wake me up in the early morning, so I could attend to patients, change dressings and draw blood. We acted as a team, worked together and learned from each other. After I had become an attending physician, nurses became my best partners in bridging the communication gap with patients. They calmed patients by describing all the good attributes of their doctors. It was a positive reinforcement to establish trust and relationship. This really helped me to get through the first few rough years in my doctor career.

In March of 2008, I had a car accident and broke my right leg while driving to a remote area to provide medical service. After surgery, I was on clutches with a plastic cast over my right leg for a long time. During such time, nurses took good care of me. Their kindness and gentleness made me feel how important their job really was for patients' recovery. When my father passed away while fighting pancreatic cancer, I remembered the nurse staff had

provided continuous care along the way. It made me realize that their support and comfort are most vital in calming the patients' family worries and anxieties.

Nurses from the Tzu Chi hospitals not only are trained professionals, they are also led by Master Cheng Yen in cultivating compassion and love toward all beings. Whether it is clinical service in a remote area or an overseas medical mission, nurses always participate with joyfulness. Among the Tzu Chi Hospitals in Hualien, Kuanshan, Yuli and Dalin, nurses dedicate their profession and youthfulness to cure the suffering of all beings. The love they deliver to the patients spreads to all regions in Taiwan.

In the accompany of all volunteers and Yi-De Club, The number of doctors in the Buddhist Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital has gradually increased from 150 attending physicians to the current 200. There are more than 60 resident doctors

and 700 nurses altogether. In terms of accomplishment, the hospital's staff has helped to deliver around 12,000 new borns. The cardiac and heart surgery team has performed 12,300 by-pass surgeries and related procedures. As a result of everyone's contribution, 350 patients' festering legs were saved from amputation. The organ transplant medical team has performed four heart transplant surgeries, twelve kidney transplants, and six cornea transplants. Also, the kidney dialysis unit helped to care for a thousand patients who require daily dialysis. These achievement are the result of all medical professionals whose first priority is the patients.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the nurses; that I appreciate the opportunity to work together as a team. Let us continue moving forward with our mission to create "the pure stream" and strive to be the "exemplary medical

facility" in the medical world.



Taipei Tzu Chi General Hospital superintendent and the medical staff celebrate several units' zero complaints performance for over a six-month period. Cakes are delivered to those ward units including internal medicine unit, ICU, neurology department, and cardiac department for their outstanding service.

Keep Nurses in Nursing

– A Discussion on
Nursing Policies and Suggestions

Dr. Chih-Hung Wang, Deputy Superintendent, Hualien Tzu Chi General Hospital



It has been 30 years since I started working in the hospital as an intern in 1981. Besides weekends and holidays, I spend over 10 hours daily in the hospital with the nursing staff. In the duration of this lengthy period, I have taken on the medical department and hospital administrative positions. Through time and experience, I have come to understand the nursing policies and transformation, and I cannot help but make my own opinions about the progress of this profession.

Medical development in specialty versus patients care

After 20 years of diversification and specialization, we may have forgotten the spirit of learning and attitudes from our initial goal. Doctors nowadays often focus too much on specialization, separating a patient from the disease, and overlooking the whole picture. Same is true in nursing. The old nurses used to be familiar in all areas, but now they are getting more specialized in areas such as: cardiology, pulmonary diseases, hematology, urology and others. As nursing becomes more specialized, it meets the demand of providing the best medical care and satisfies doctor's expectation on efficiency and quality. However, it becomes detached from the common disease and non-illness related areas outside the person's particular specialization.

Clinically, nursing staff are much closer to patients than doctors. The time they spend with patients are ten to twenty times more than doctors. Therefore, the nature of the job is to care for patients, both physically and mentally; that is a nurse's basic work ethic. Therefore, I call my nursing colleagues as "Bai Yi Da Shi", also known as Guanyin Bodhisattva. It is also the expectation and blessing of Dharma

Master Cheng Yen, that they rescue people from suffering.

Doctors and nurses are like a conjoined twins, who have their own medical expertise but need each other to cooperate and solve problems together. This is in fact the most efficient and effective way of medical treatment for patients.

Nurses are the first line of defense

The imbalanced supply of nurses is a big issue in hospital management. Ideally, if every trained individual stays in nursing, we would have enough nurses in our hospitals. The problem is that a majority of nursing staff usually leave the first line of duty after a short while. Some are promoted to nursing administrators, some work as managers in public health related jobs, and they lose direct contact with patients.

Personally, I believe that 90% of the doctors graduated from medical school should stay by patients' side and solve their issues. The main goal and value of medical education is for the patients. The same goes for education in nursing.

I think the main reason for the shortage of nurses is poor salary structure. Senior nurses do not receive justifying pay in respect to their experience. In fact, doctors enjoy



Deputy Superintendent Chih-Hung Wang thinks the value of doctors and nurses is to serve the patients. This is also his principle in treating patients.

working with experienced nurses, and the hospital should pay more for experience. From an administrator's point of view, since the newly-graduated nurses have less clinical intern opportunities, it is not reasonable that the salary of a new graduate and experienced nurse is almost the same. This should be re-evaluated. Maybe we can use the salary range between resident doctor and physician-in-charge as the benchmark so that experienced nurses could receive better benefits.

The other reason is the disparity in work issues. For example, nurses with ten years of experience in the same

hospital should have a different salary structure based upon the departments' levels of complexity, risks and difficulties. In an overseas country, I have witnessed a group of 40-50 year-old senior nurses assisting to complete a difficult surgery and caring for ICU patients without resident physicians. Because of their experience, they did not waste time on shift change and could finish related records completely and efficiently. They also maintain a good work-life balance and the physician-in-charge depends on them heavily. Currently, the greatest problem in medical centers in Taiwan is "delayed shifts" – which is delaying the

time to go off duty. This is because the inexperienced nurses lack experience to finish tasks on time and result in poor efficiency. And of course a shortage of nurses worsens the situation even further.

After twenty years as an attending physician, I still work on the first line of defense with nurses. Occasionally, I encounter new nurses and want to be more considerate to them. It is such a pity if they lose their willpower and confidence before they become familiar with required skills and techniques. I believe that there is a chance to have “different pay for different work”. The difference in salary should not be determined only by educational level or shifts. The occupancy rate of the ward should also be considered. This is not saying that “studying means nothing”. People with different education backgrounds surely would have different abilities in probing medical knowledge and discussing professional cases. However, it is worthwhile to consider if the first line of nursing staff need to acquire such qualification. Under the current system, only national level nursing administrators can think about changing this situation. Once the policy has changed, each hospital would accommodate to the policy change. This would have a real value for senior staff’s experience. Most importantly,

they would make clinical nursing as their long term career.

Nurses and doctors should be a well-knitted family

In clinical practice, cases of conflict between young doctors and experienced nurses do occur. Sometimes inexperienced doctors would make the wrong judgment that ran against the training of experienced nurses. The latter would feel discouraged or weary of the environment. Positive attitude is important to preserve the close relationship between doctors and nurses.

The delicate nurse-doctor relationship should be taught at internship, so doctors would avoid



The transition from junior to senior is to be attentive in all details.



Only the cooperation of doctors and nurses can provide the best care for patients.

unnecessary conflict. Nurses are always the best collaborators to doctors. To those young doctors who have recently joined the workforce, they are like captains in treating diseases. Every medical order must be carefully contemplated and communicated because it affects the entire medical team, and the interest of the patient can be put at risk.

Doctors should try to understand their nurses

As an administrator of the hospital, I have been working on improving the work environment of nursing care.

However, the areas I can work on are limited. The root has to be changed from the system. In reality, due to long working hours and irregular schedules, nurses tend to narrow their living circles. As a matter of fact, working night shifts would affect the health. Therefore, it would be reasonable to have higher compensation. This is something for the medical policy makers to consider. As for female nursing staff, their friends and family, including their husbands, in-laws, and children, all wish them to work regular hours. After all, who could stand long working hours with such little freedom?

Furthermore, the younger

generation seems to wish everything to be regulated and guided. They wish to get off work after following the work policy and computer guidance. However, “medical treatment” is not a job that always have set hours and procedures. A question from the patient or a complaint from family members may lead to changes in patient’s condition. Young medical nursing staff may lack patience and overlook the potential danger.

In conclusion, the more experienced the doctors are, the more “thankful” they are for hardworking nursing staff. From before till now, I have become very respectful to those hardworking nursing staff. I respect their professionalism and work ethic. One time when I was working in late shifts, I saw a team of nurses giving a bath to an elder with such care as if he were their father.

Truths to be told, more than 90% of nursing staff respect and love their job, but have to choose between the ideal and reality. We need a system that meets the need of the situation in order to maintain motivation. This article is to express some thoughts and suggestions on behalf of nursing staff, and I wish everyone in the medical treatment profession to be healthy and happy.



Most nurses respect and love their work. They seem rush because they have to take care of patients and race with time. Deputy Superintendent Chih-Hung Wang brings up this suggestion to improve nursing environment and retain talented staff.

The Great Love Behind Nursing

Dr. Chun-Hung Lin, Surgeon, Dalin Tzu Chi General Hospital



One morning during my rounds in the patient ward, I saw a little boy sitting quietly by a door. I learned that he was a sick child of our nursing staff. No one in the family could take care of him and his mother could not change shifts at the last minute so he had to stay at a room in her unit.

Juggling between work and family

In addition to the busy schedule at the hospital, nursing professionals also play multiple roles in their families as loving sons and daughters, husbands and wives, and parents. While on job, however, they put aside the personal aspect and devote undivided attention and meticulous care for patients. Furthermore, nursing demands the workers to persistently pursue new knowledge in order to improve the quality of care. I often find coworkers spending their free hours pursuing further education. The second shift staff would arrive early for on-site training, while the third shift colleagues sacrifice their daytime sleep hours to learn advanced subjects. Their diligent effort in finding ways to improve their professional knowledge is truly inspirational. Juggling between family, work, and self-improvement is certainly a challenging lesson in life.

Never stop helping others

According to a research by the University of Pennsylvania, the ideal patient to nurse ratio is four to one. Furthermore, statistics show that when a nurse is given one additional patient

to watch over, the fatality rate of the hospitalized patient rises by seven percent. In Taiwan, a nurse cares for eight to twelve patients on average. This trend results in constant overtime, excessive work place stress, and a high attrition rate. Although that's the overall working condition, at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, I am able to observe a different side to nursing care.

For instance, the following conversation is common among nurses in patient wards.

Mei-Zhen: "the IV drip for bed 5 has gone out and the patient at bed 8 is running a fever again."

Shu-Ling: "the operating room said they're ready for patient transfer."

Scenes and dialogs like these play out over and over every day and in every corner of the patient wards. Still, the nursing staff always handles every instance with a smile, a positive attitude, and a lot of patience. With soft and gentle words, they hearten the patients to confront ailments with courage. They listen mindfully and provide companionship that supports and consoles.

Yet these nursing colleagues do not ask for much in return. So long as their patients improve in health or give positive feedback, these toiling co-workers would feel relief from their laborious responsibilities.



Doctor Chun-Hung Lin is profoundly aware of the challenge endured by the nurse colleagues who juggle between the demands of work and family. Here, Doctor Lin (left) and the nursing staff are discussing a patient case.

Despite the exhausting clinical workloads, I often hear exchanges like the following in the patient ward:

“Shu-Ling, have you signed up for the Winter Aid Distribution Camp in Yunan and Guizhou?”

“Not yet!”

“Hurry! There is almost no spot left on the roster.”

In fact, whenever the television news broadcasts disaster news, such as earthquakes in Indonesia or Sichuan, or the annually scheduled relief distribution and free clinic event, I would hear about

colleagues mutually spreading the words and rushing to sign up. With respect to these nursing coworkers’ noble deeds, I would think of a particular Jing Si Aphorism from Master Cheng Yen: “Those who give earnestly are the true creators of life experience; working for the betterment of others is a personal enrichment in itself.”

Inevitably, their selfless contributions are heart warming and inspire the utmost admiration. In my opinion, these are exactly the expressions of great love.



Besides their dedication to work, Doctor Lin also commends the nursing coworkers at Dalin Tzu Chi General Hospital for their earnest contributions to charity. Indeed, working for the betterment of others is a personal enrichment in itself. Photo depicts Dr. Lin and his coworkers attend an on-site training.

Gratitude for the nurses – Patients’ health

Nursing is a non-stop 24-hour endeavor; it involves caring for the body, mind, and soul of both the patients and their families. Nurses are confidants, as well as administrators of the patients. During my medical career, nursing care played an important role; for every doctor there is a group of “angels in white”. These nurses silently dedicate themselves to their patients.

Without these devoted Florence Nightingales who diligently watch over the ailing, where would cheerful recoveries come from?

Dharma Master Cheng Yen once said that Tzu Chi is a big family. Through the meticulous care of the medical professionals, countless smaller families are able to reunite happily and healthily. I am grateful to all of them and especially the nurses who play a significant role in bridging the communication gap between patients and doctors.

Patients' Closest Friends

Dr. Yi-Ying Huang, Dept. of Metabolism and Endocrinology, Taichung Tzu Chi General Hospital

A strong and seemingly healthy policeman Mr. A had a hard time accepting the fact that he had been diagnosed with diabetes. He thought: "I have a strong body and I am in my prime; how could I have a disease that is the privilege of the elderly." According to the test results of blood glucose level and Hemoglobin A1c, the doctor at the clinic prescribed medication and advised him to diet and exercise. However, Mr. A was not able to get his blood sugar level under control and was in a foul mood after each clinic visit. He complained that the demand of his working schedule and the night-time duty prevented him from following the recommended diet and regular exercise.

One day, we were surprised that Mr. A came in the clinic in a good mood and expressed that he wished to cooperate with the staff to change his diet and do regular morning bicycling exercise. He had joined the Diabetes Care Network in which he sees a diabetic educator in addition to the routine checkup with a physician. A diabetes educator provides additional support

by understanding the health history of the patient and patient's family, and the details of the patient's life style, diet and exercise. One day, Mr. A came to the clinic for the routine test of fasting glucose level after his night-time duty. The diabetes educator saw that Mr. A was tired and hungry; so he took out two steamed buns, originally meant for his own breakfast, and handed them to Mr. A. Mr. A was moved by this simple act of kindness and made a hundred eighty degree turn in his attitude. After that day, Mr. A. has become compliant in doing the three-monthly check-ups to prevent diseases associated with diabetes such as retina problem, foot problem, kidney disease, nervous

system disease, heart attack and stroke.

When Mr. A told me about the details of the story, I saw in his eyes the power of friendship and personal care. As a result of this positive interaction with the diabetes educator, Mr. A is able to gain rapid control of his blood sugar.

Shared care

The story of Mr. A reminded me of another patient I treated three years ago. Liu was a young man in his twenties; he arrived at the Tzu Chi Hospital by bus from Shalu with a small luggage. He said that he was suffering from Type I diabetes and was often hospitalized due to the poor control of his sugar level.



Dr. Yi-Ying Huang saw that the diabetes patients were able to control their blood sugar level under the care of the nursing staff and diabetes educator. She said the nursing staff and health educators are the best friends of doctors and patients.

Some hospitals refused to treat him because he was homeless and could not afford to pay the health insurance. He heard that the newly built Tzu Chi Hospital in Taichung was in operation and decided to come for a treatment. He looked haggard and lost. His lower limbs were weak due to peripheral nerve diseases. In the hospital, he was often seen wandering around alone in a wheel chair and would sneak out of the hospital in the middle of the night to have a cigarette.

I have seen many young patients who not only have physical illness, they also have family, financial, and psychological problems. I wish to help them to fight the illness so they can stand on their feet again in life. However, I am always too busy in caring for patients and don't really have time to talk with them and to give them words of encouragement.

One day I saw Liu no longer in the wheel chair. I was surprised to see the drastic change and decided to inquire about the situation. It turned out that one day the special nurse was talking to him about life, and when she said: 'You are still young, but you are not as brave as the old man next door. Look! The old man tried very hard to stand on his own feet!' These few words really struck a chord with Liu and he made a determination to walk with his own

legs. After being discharged from the hospital, Liu found a job through the help of the Social Service Department. He comes back to the hospital for routine checkups to control his blood sugar. Liu is now a completely different person from the previous homeless person from Shalu.

A person may be very strong, capable and successful in health. However, once hit by illness, man often loses his will, gives up, and becomes unmotivated. A normal happy life can be destroyed by illness. Doctors and health staff are trained to treat patients from a pure medical point of view; that is, they treat the physical illness. However, diabetes is an illness closely associated with life style, diet, and exercise; medication alone is not sufficient to bring the blood sugar to a normal level. A physician treating a diabetic patient may not be able to care about all aspects of the patient's needs; in this case, the specialty nurse, nursing staff for patient's room, and the diabetes educator may play an important role in providing key personal touch, advise, and loving care. Together, the doctors and the health staff, like the Bodhisattvas Guanyin with thousands of eyes and hands, all contribute to the well-being of diabetic patients and help them to maintain a normal blood sugar level.

T I M A



No matter who you are

- nurses
- medical practitioners
- pharmacists
- any health-care related personnel
- or ordinary people with a heart to help

Welcome

Join TIMA, Give with Joy

Regardless of one's race, religion or nationality, anyone willing to compassionately contribute time, energy, and medical expertise to help the needy is welcome to join the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA).

A group of Tzu Chi volunteers and medical professionals came together and established a complete medical facility to set foot on isolated villages that lack medical services to provide free clinics and charity services, upholding the spirit of "great compassion for all, and great mercy even to strangers." Thus formally named as the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) in 1998. Now TIMA members are over 11 countries and 58 Tzu Chi chapters around the world.

