

# Cure and Care

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In 1912, the International Council of Nurses dedicated May 12 – the day of Florence Nightingale’s birthday – as an International Nurses Day. The council recognizes her lifetime efforts in the establishing the hospital management system, improving the quality of nursing care, enhancing health, preventing disease, speeding recovery, and alleviating suffering. The day is dedicated to Nightingale’s endeavors in founding of the first nursing school in the United Kingdom and transforming nursing to a respectable and scientific profession.

## **From Conflict to Convergence**

When I was in my internship through the residency years, I had a very bad relationship with the nurses. “Dr. Lee, you didn’t have the order sheets printed right. It is your job to do it right.” With tears in my eyes, I followed their instructions and redid the sheets.

“Dr. Lee, the blood sample you drew hemolyzed. Please do it again.”

“Dr. Lee, the nasogastric tube of X bed has expired, please replace it.”

“The order of X bed is out of date. Remember to renew the order.”

Sometimes, I wondered whether I was a physician or a nobody. And why the nurses always found fault with me. Since becoming an attending physician and joining Dalin Tzu Chi General Hospital, I began to have a different perception toward the nurses.

Mr. Chou is a patient who had had laryngeal carcinoma and went through hemi-pharyngeal resection surgery. The surgical operation was successful. He was fortunate to keep his vocal cords, and was transferred to a regular ward. He was supposed to be happy, but he yelled and screamed until we discovered that he wanted to leave the hospital to be with his friends. I attempted to communicate with him, but he didn't want to talk to me. The head nurse and the social worker patiently explained to Mr. Chou about the importance of the postoperative care. Afterwards, he was willing to cooperate with us. Eventually, he recovered from his illness. Although we have excellent surgical skills, the patient wouldn't be able to go back to his normal life without the nurses' loving care.

### **Gratitude to Nurses for Their Professionalism**

"Mr. Yang, male, aged 52. The fifth day after his oral cancer surgery. Urine output is 1,600 cc. No blood in the drainage tubes of bilateral neck. Highest body temperature is 37 degrees. SpO2 is 99% under FiO2 25%. We plan to discontinue the sedatives today..."

At the SICU, a nurse described in details about the postoperative care of a patient who received an extensive resection – free skin-flap reconstruction surgery. Under intensive nursing care, the patient recovered well. It was estimated that the respirator would be removed and the patient would be transferred to a regular ward on the following day. The families felt relieved and smiled.



**Dr. Ching-Chih Lee feels grateful to the nurses for their service so the hospital can continue to save lives.**

It is a challenge to care for patients with tracheotomy, arterial lines, head-neck drainage tubes, central venous infusion lines, nasogastric tubes, lower limb wound drainage tubes, and urinary drainage tubes. Nurses always make sure these devices are working, in addition to other tasks such as sputum suction, changing of the posture and irrigation. Because of their great efforts in caring the patients, doctors and surgeons are able to concentrate on doing their jobs. At the outpatient clinic, patients often thank the doctors openly. Actually, these nurses deserve all the credit. They possess a compassionate heart like that of Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva (the Lady of Great Mercy). Compare their duties, my job of renewing orders and inserting nasogastric tube are minuscule.

Life is hectic and non-stop at the hospital. Saving lives is the work of physicians and nurses who follow the footsteps of Florence Nightingale. They bestow their lives and give selflessly. They work long hours, bear high pressure, and often take turns in night shifts. Furthermore, they face various challenges, such as unbalanced schedule, high turnover rate, and a complicated educational system. We need to do more to promote their profession, expand the scope of nursing related research, create more channels of recruiting, and increase their compensation.

### **Importance of Cure and Care**

As a physician, I feel happy when a patient is cured, and often time I overlook those who participate a major role in caring the patients. Without their contributions, no matter how supreme our skills, we will not be able to put them to good use.

Several Monday nights around 11:30pm, after attending late meetings and on the way back to the dorm, I ran across nurses who were reporting to duty. In my heart, I said words of prayer to thank their selfless giving so we can continue to save lives.

**Dr. Lee suggests ways to promote nursing profession for it's a respectful and short-of-manpower profession.**

