

Road to Self-Actualization

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Shortage of nurses is a long-existing phenomenon in Taiwan. According to Taipei Nurse Association annual survey, clinical nursing turnover rate is 28%, and it increases continually year after year. New nurses' turnover rate within three months is 32%; annual turnover rate is as high as 58%. In the southern region of Taiwan, the nurses' turnover rate within three months is even up to 70%. On average, one-third of nurses are new among all medical institutes throughout the whole nation. It seriously affects the organizational stability and quality of care.

Currently, nursing shortage is caused by many factors such as changing demographics, female role expansion in the workforce, increased opportunities in other industries. However, the field of nursing requires shifts rotation, coupled with intense work pressure, poor job benefits, inadequate compensation, and scarce career advance opportunities add to the problem of job security. At the same time, a continually aging population with severe medical care worsen the situation even more. People have a "consumer" attitude toward medical care and often ask for unreasonable demands, therefore increasing the tension between doctors-patients relationship. For example, one person suffering a common cold wanted to be hospitalized in order to stay away from noisy neighbors. The nursing resource is already struggling; such factors only worsen the current situation.

Nursing is very tedious and stressful. After normal working hours, it takes at least half an hour to two hours to complete the process of shift change. During days off, they still need to fulfill their educational credits, not to mention about family, work and personal growth. People are exhausted with work, life and family. Not long ago, a former nurse exposed to a CNN reporter about the toil of being a nurse in Taiwan. Some went on the street to protest unreasonable working hours. Such events caught people's attention.

Recently, a medical negligence lawsuit was settled with an award of 30 million NT. It is shocking to all colleagues in the medical field. One of my classmate commented, "We, surgeons, are not just leaving the industry. We are fleeing!"

A young surgeon who comes to this field with passion now needs to sacrifice with such heavy costs. If we do not flee, it is our families who will be affected and suffer in the end. This is happening in Taiwan's medical profession. When nurses disappear, physicians flee, who will take care of the patients in the future?

In May of 2012, the Department of Health invited seventeen experts in nursing to come up with ten strategies to improve the overall care system. The purpose is mainly to streamline the processes of evaluation, examination, background check, and focus more in terms of patients care. Setting standard is an essential element, but returning the administrative duties back to the administrative staff is even more crucial, so nurses can focus on their professional caring service. In the meantime, reducing unnecessary and tedious paperwork and procedures can improve workflow efficiency. These steps are to strengthen the social image of professional nursing. Eventually, the shortage crisis will be improved. However, the current shortage of doctors in various sectors such as internal, surgical, gynecology,

pediatrics, and emergency department also need to be addressed. In particular, the early retirement system is a strain to the current shortage.

Simplifying operations and reasonable compensation are important on the one hand. According to Maslow hierarchy of needs, the first level of "physiological needs" is more about survival, food and hunger, the basics. The second level of "safety needs" is about working in a safe environment, without excessive penalties, stringent evaluations and examinations. The third level is about "love and belongingness". Communication among team members and partners need to be open, and foster a sense of belonging and solidarity within the team. The fourth level is "self-esteem needs". It is about respecting others and being respected. The fifth level is "self-actualization". It is about utilizing one's potential so one can accomplish and succeed in achieving his goal. In the currently "unsafe environment", how do people elevate self-esteem, not to mention about "self-actualization"?

Recently, I have a chance to observe the several things that are most satisfying in their jobs. They include the following: emotional harmony among colleagues, familial warmth at workplace, a sense of accomplishment, opportunities to participate in various competitions, and thank you notes from patients and families.

My sister worked at the cardiac surgical department in England for over 30 years. She was a clinical nurse providing first level care to patients, and working different shifts. She retires at the age of 61. Medical professionals in Britain normally leave the workplace when they reach retirement age. As long as the workload is reasonable, given the opportunities to learn and grow, nurses and doctors will hold on to their career.

In family medicine, patients often come to consult potential problem and diseases. The problem usually falls into chronic or urgent care. People come for annual check-up, vaccination, counseling, medical certificate or prescription drugs. As a result, compare to other departments, a family medicine clinic nurse needs to assist in a wide range of information. Their job is not just calling patients or signing-off the paperwork. Moreover, they need to coordinate various activities, so the doctors can see patients more smoothly. Sometimes, they need to play the role of public relation to assist in any way they can. Often, other department might come to them for

Doctors understand the most of how essential nurse colleagues are. It is imperative that everyone is friendly and encouraging to all medical staffs.

support. When they are not familiar with regular routine, of course, the doctor needs to be understanding so the cycle of cooperation and solidarity would be perpetuated. Finally, let me take this opportunity to thank my team members Bi-Xiang Zou, Xi-En Lee, Pai-Qang Huang and all the supporting staff. With your great help, we can feel at ease.

