



Commitment

Exploring Why Nursing Staff Would Care for Patients Off Work

Some occupations need to be unbiased, fair and transparent.

After work, it is not rare that nurses continue to deliver care to patients and families.

Pack a lunch box for recovering patients who have no visitors;
Take turns to adopt an abandoned child until a placement is arranged;
Visit patients on their time off;
Every bit of sincerity, it never appears on the official nurse records;
It only echoes in their hearts through their action.

It is to fulfill a promise they made when choosing their career
to deliver a complete care to patients and families,
The glory of humanity firmly illuminates in the actions of nurses.

Renewing Strength from Patients' Life Stories

Yi-Ching Lin, Head Nurse in Respiratory Care Center , Hualien Tzu Chi Medical Center

I have been working in the intensive care units for more than ten years. Day in and day out, we beat time, cheat death, and deal with the chores of life. Never have I had the luxury of leaving the ivory tower and stroll into real life. It was an experience beyond my imagination!

But, things changed after I took on a new position. The Respiratory Care Center is not a large group and does not have the resources to assume major tasks. However, in just over a thousand days more than two hundred patients are cared for in this center. Through the patients, we learned many life stories filled with happiness and sadness. On Christmas day 2010, we conducted our first patients outreach – a warm and happy family visit. During the visit, we broke down the barriers of distance and assembled tiny

individual forces into a stream of powerful energy. We turned our care into real life action.

Life Education – End of Life

It was such an unforgettable impression when we first met this patient with tetanus; We were instructed to keep disturbances to a minimum. In contrast to a brightly illuminated intensive care unit, his ward quarter was dimmed on purpose. His bedside ID was blanked out (Mr. X). Yet, we saw his determination to fight for his life, to defeat the side effects of sickness, pain and catalepsy. He would ring his bedside bell to confirm our presence and he promised to cooperate with every procedure at all times. After his recovery, he came back for a visit.



Head nurse Yi-Ching Lin(left) thanks all the patients who affirm the mission of the Respiratory Care Center. Picture shows a scene of the home visit.

The moment he “walked” into ICU, instead of being carried on a bed, the entire nursing staff cheered.

Unfortunately, just two days before our home visit, the sad news of his passing came. We were told that an infection took his life. It was a shock difficult to comprehend. In the end, although the fate is the same, he lived a different journey; like the rising smoke of burning incense in the air, it touched everyone in the heart. Thank you, Mr. X, for a lesson to face death, and to respect life.

A Patient’s Perspective

The moment we stepped inside the home during a patient’s visit, we heard him using our signal to get our attention.

Instinctively, we all understand the signal. As usual, we took our positions, performed professional evaluations of the situation, collected data swifflly, and explain to the families for the proper action. However, this time it was just a drill. Our patient Ah-nun and the entire group broke into laughter. It seemed like Uncle Ah-nun did not have a sequela, and we could see that he is living his life whole-heartedly.

Uncle Ah-nun, you taught us to see the world from the patients’ point of view. It is a tremendous different view while lying in bed versus standing upright. Because of you, we have a deeper appreciation for medical care, we have a better understanding that nursing should return to the basics. The best quality care is amplified through empathy.

Welcoming Impermanence with a Smile

It was an early morning shift when I first time I met Auntie Fen. She looked skinny. Even though she had a tracheotomy, she communicated by means of handwriting and showing the happy face tattoo on her finger. She was a strong and healthy civil servant, living in a well-to-do family. Inside the house, her “Iron Man” trophies are on display. Because of her own negligence and procrastination, she did not take timely and regular care of her asthma, so it turned into pulmonary hypertension. As a result, she needed a constant supply of oxygen for breathing.

She once said, “I was so discouraged. I blamed the whole world – the sky, the earth, my husband, and

myself. Nevertheless, the illness is the impermanence that will not go away. Whether you cry or smile, a day of life is one day of being alive. So, I decided to seize every moment and live each day with a smile.”

She tattooed a smiley face on her hand to remind herself to smile. Thank you, Auntie Fen. You have brought strength into life with your wisdom. We have learned to confront impermanence with a smile.

Thanks for the Goodtime Together

Finally, I would like to tell our patients, “Thank you! Thank you for the beautiful time together. Because of you and your spirit, we are able to continue with our work. Through your support, we will carry on.”



Auntie Fen's (2nd from left) life story encourages the Respiratory Care Center team of Hualien Tzu Chi Medical Center.

Pay Your Patient a Home Visit

By Chih-Li Liao, Registered Nurse, Hualien Tzu Chi Medical Center

It has almost been five years since I came to Hualien and I have been busy with my job. Every day I would complain, "I have no time! I am too busy." In reality, I wasted a lot of time in my off-duty hours. Before my first home visit, I have never thought of visiting discharged patients and their examine post treatment condition. It was until the time the hospital held a reunion for oral cancer patients, then I had the opportunity to visit the home of cancer patients.

Once, I remember visiting a throat cancer patient. We traveled by car and looked for an indistinct address without an exact location. We arrived at the location but had to walk toward the address. Out of nowhere, we found ourselves surrounded by many stray dogs; abandoned televisions, chairs, and desks scattered all over the nearby fields. We then saw an abandoned rusty freight container.

Inside the container, there was only one bed, one cotton quilt, and one light. The rest of the place was so dilapidated



The nurses of Hualien Tzu Chi Medical Center visit the patient's home and realize how difficult life can be after being discharged from the hospital. The experience has led her to become more considerate and compassionate.

and hard to pass through. There was no toilet, no pots and pans, no hot water, and only one set of clothes. It was wintertime; the weather was cold and damp and it rained continuously. Then I asked myself,

“How is this environment habitable? Not to mention for a cancer patient.”

Looking around, the surrounding was like a forest jungle. There were no houses nearby. It was like living on a deserted island. The toilet could be any spot amidst the trees. The patient had no one to help him prepare meals, except one friend and a welfare organization that helps him with some necessities. The container was his only shelter yet he treasured every surrounding object. Living in such a harsh environment, he seemed to be content with what he had. After all, it was his only home.

I still could not believe what I saw on that day. In our civilized and technologically-advanced society, his habitat is considered primitive and inhabitable. If I did not have the opportunity to visit this patient, I would not be able to imagine why patients are so appreciative toward any resource they receive at the hospital. We always wish the patients to leave the hospital as quickly as

they can from our own perspective. We supply patients with medicines and prepare them to take care of themselves; but their living conditions are often overlooked. It was assumed that the patient would live at home with family members, but no one realized that he lived in such harsh condition. We did not know if he would be able to return to the hospital for more treatments as scheduled. Now it is clear that he could not possibly afford to return for more treatments.

If it had not been the home visits, I would not have so much thoughts and feelings about my patients. Master Cheng Yen said, “If it is the right thing, go ahead and do it!” I hope to make use of this experience to let more people know that many patients need support from the society. This is a learning opportunity for us. From the home visit, we have become appreciative of our blessings and will do our best to create more support for cancer patients.

Some nurses share their experiences that they would feel fulfilled after a home visit to a patient's home they cared and worried.

