



Yu-Yun Ho,

A Palliative Care Nurse
of Dalin Tzu Chi General Hospital

By Hui-Yen Liao

Ten Years of Hospice Care

Become a Nurse to Help Those in Need

Puli Town of Nantou Province is called Little Luoyang. The people there live a simple life. Yu-Yun Ho came from a farming family. She completed her elementary school and junior high in Puli. When she was in the primary school, she contracted pneumonia. The disease affects her physically, so she was often picked on because of her height. Because of this experience, she decided to help those who need help when she grows up.

In her junior high years, her English teacher encouraged her to develop a career in public service. She decided to become a nurse as she was about to graduate from junior high. She passed the entrance exam to Taichong Nursing School. She left home and moved to Taichong to study from 1985 to 1989.

Parents Teach by Example

Yu-Yun is the third child among six siblings. Her parents are serious about their education. Although they are not rich, they have always been honest and kind, working hard to give their children the best. Her father is plain and simple, and they live frugally with big hearts. Her mother is a traditional homemaker. Her parents' teaching by example deeply affects her. They expect Yu-Yun to be an honest person.



Yu-Yun set her goal as a caregiver when she was young. She chose nursing college because of her junior high school teacher's encouragement. Yu-Yun Ho (Second roll, the fourth from the left)



Yu-Yun understands her parents and tries her very best in all aspects.

As a young girl, Yu-Yun studied hard so her parents did not have to worry about her. She worked in the library during winter and summer breaks, and took advantage of opportunities for scholarships. After graduating from Taichong Nursing School, she entered Meiho Nursing College (two-year college). During winter and summer breaks, she worked as an assistant in the hospital.

“Besides earnings, I can learn some skills,” said Yu-Yun.

After graduating the two-year college, Yu-Yun passed the entrance examination to go to National Cheng-Kung University, majoring in nursing in August 1995. The passing ratio is 1 out of 100 applicants. It was not an easy task, but she worked hard to achieve her goal. During her four years in the university, she continued getting good grades and obtained many scholarships, some of which were granted by Tzu Chi.

Falling in Love with Hospice Care

Yu-Yun remembered what Master Cheng Yen said when she received the scholarship, “I do not ask scholarship recipients to return the favor to Tzu Chi, but



When caring for terminally ill patients, besides reducing their physical pain, psychological and spiritual comforts are also important. Hospice and palliative care will help patients and their families in various ways. Yu-Yun is helping a patient through art treatment.

to remember that these scholarships are donated by kind people. I hope you will spread the seeds and power of great love, and care for more people who are in need.”

Her saying left a deep impression with Yu-Yun who wanted to serve at Tzu Chi once she had the opportunity.

When she was at Cheng-Kung University, she took Dr. Co-Shi Chao’s class. She then realized that hospice is a special profession in nursing. Yu-Yun was very interested. She remembered Chao’s four principles in hospice care: to care for the whole person, whole family, whole term, and whole team. The purpose of hospice care is to help terminally ill cancer patients to be at ease with the body, mind, and soul. Chao said Yu-Yun has a hospice face, which made her feel that she could work in the hospice area.

From Beginning to End

About the time when she graduated from the university, Taiwan experienced the 921 earthquake in Nantao. Dalin Tzu Chi General Hospital was also completed the same year in August of 2000. The Heart Lotus Ward of Tzu Chi Hospital is one of the earliest wards that resembles hospice care. On top of all these, Yu-Yun is also a Buddhist, so she joined the hospice team later in the year.

Many nursing staffs transfer to different units to explore their interests. Yu-Yun has always stayed in the hospice care section.

Promoting Hospice Care Outside of Heart Lotus Ward

As hospice care in Taiwan becomes more matured and stable, after three years and six months serving at the Heart Lotus Ward, she decided to become a hospice and palliative care nurse in 2005.

While working at the Heart Lotus Ward, Yu-Yun saw a lot patients and their families suffered from unnecessary mental and physical pain because they consider hospice care as the last resort. Too many patients come to the Heart Lotus Ward after they became unconscious. There was not enough preparation time for the final care and help the patients to complete their last wishes. The lack of time caused families to be ill-prepared. Besides, many people do not know that hospice care can be done at home. Yu-Yun wants to be a hospice and palliative care nurse to extend the service to non-hospice wards so cancer patients have more options to hospice care.

Yu-Yun goes between different wards in the hospital and provides care for



patients at home. She takes care of areas in pain control, health evaluation, hospice promotion and emotional support. Yu-Yun coordinates family meetings with patients to help them understand the process and make medical decisions. It has been six years and eight months since she transferred to be a hospice and palliative care nurse. She has served thousands of patients and their families during her ten years hospice career. From these experiences, she understands life and death and realizes the importance of hospice care.

Transform Her Love for Father into Motivation

“My father has always been my role model.”

Yu-Yun feels that her father passed away too soon. She wishes her father could see her achievement. Even till today, he is still a source of motivation for her work and life. It was not long after she started working in hospice area that her father became her patient. Yu-Yun’s father was paralyzed after a liver tumor metastasized to the spinal cord. Yu-Yun was by her father’s side; she helped him shave and listened to him telling his life stories. Yu-Yun is happy because her father said, “I am proud that my child is working in the hospice/palliative care.” He confirmed the value of Yu-Yun’s job.

Although her father passed away in October of that year, her families became



Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital’s Heart Lotus Wards always decorate the floor with festive atmosphere so the ward feels like home. Yu-Yun Ho (left in the front roll) and Dr. Shi-Chi Chen (second on the left in the back roll) both enjoy working in hospice and palliative care. They are married because of their common interest.

closer during the period when they cared for him. Of course, the experience helped Yu-Yun to have a better understanding of the patients and their families' feelings.

A Complete Life

Since Yu-Yun joined hospice service, she has been a dedicated staff. She never thought that she would have met her other half here. Dr. Shi-Chi Chen of Heart Lotus Ward also loves his job of hospice care, so they have become partners for life. In her busy work schedule, they are respectful and considerate to each other. They are a couple that everyone envies.

In 2011, Yu-Yun attended the Ninth Asian Pacific Hospices Conference and presented her thesis and clinical experience in English. It was her most memorable and valuable experience in life.

The hospice care is now promoting "Four Aspects" to help patients to say "Thank you", "I am sorry", "Good-bye" and "I love you" in time. Yu-Yun teaches by actions. For example, she says "Thank you" to family for their support and those who help her. Every day, Yu-Yun chants "Amitabha Sutra" to all the cancer patients hoping they can live happily in the other world. This is her way of saying goodbye to them. As for saying sorry, she admits that she may have offend others due to her stubbornness, she would like to say "sorry" and to repent.

Passing on the Mission

A person asks Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of hospice care, "What do you consider as the biggest failure?" She answered, "The biggest failure is that there is no one to carry on the hospice care."

No matter how good an idea or mission, if there is no successor, the practice might disappear. Yu-Yun expects herself to assume the mission not only to introduce the true meaning of hospice care, but also to train others to pass on the knowledge to the next generation.

Yu-Yun says that she is so lucky to be able to serve patients in hospice. She notices that when there is love, all issues can be solved. This is also said in the Buddhist terms, "Mercy has no boundaries". She will continue to accompany patients and families through their lowest points in life, helping patients to live with dignity and families to be free of their sadness, so that both the deceased and the living can be at peace.