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# From Novice to Expert

## My Five Years in Nursing

Since my childhood, I have never thought I would become a nurse. Or rather, a “Nurse Specialist.” I was an ordinary high school student. After my graduation, I passed the college entrance examination and was admitted to the Department of Nursing. With family supporting my choice, I started my nursing career.

I had an interview with Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital in my senior year. I was excited when I received the job offer. I received my nursing license soon after graduation. In February of 2007, after finishing my military service, I came to Hualien and began my nursing career at Tzu Chi.

### Hell-like Training

When I was in school, I heard other students say that the working environment is very different from student life. At the time, I also knew there would be some changes, but I did not expect such a big difference. When I started the job, I realized that what I heard was true.

During the first year training period, the daily hardships were unthinkable, and my tears never stopped. I was either scolded by doctors or the senior nurses or administrators; I thought the bombardment would never end. I realized that there are many things that I had to learn and pick up quickly.

In my second week, I pushed a cart slowly out of the treatment room. A senior nurse saw me and yelled, “Why are you so slow?” Though as a young novice, I could not stand it anymore. I replied without thinking, “What’s the rush?” Later, she explained to me that the unit is cardiology ward, also known as the “third intensive care ward of Medical Intensive Care Unit”. The patient’s condition

changes in a blink of an eye and can be very serious. I learned that I should think about the patient first, observe them carefully, and deal with any changes quickly. My slow movement made her nervous. Actually, after two weeks, I wanted to leave the job. However, after talking with my supervisor, and thinking about my family's expectation, I decided not to become a stress intolerant newbie. I gave myself another chance and I stay on until today.

### **Sweet Memory of Hardships**

This February will be the fifth year since I started the job and I have become an experienced senior nurse. The past was full of hardships, but now they have become sweet memories. After those difficult days, I found that there are many complicated tasks that I had yet to master. I needed to understand a patient's medical history, medication and its side effects, and learn ways to communicate with medical teams. Every day was a struggle to keep up with my own promises.

I realized that a nurse's work is not as simple as I thought. Although I did my best to reach my own expectation, I felt that my ability was limited. There are numerous times when I have to review a patient's record after work, or discuss with medical teams about a patient who requires intensive care. Dr. Ji-Hung Wang often encouraged me and told me,

"Hao! You are the mainstay of the



**Refused to be a "whiny newbie", Jien Hao Chen decided to stay in nursing.**

Cardiology Department. Keep up the good work!"

"The training in cardiology is not easy. Thank you for your hard work."

"Hao, now you are a supervisor in the unit. Make sure you teach junior nurses how to do their work."

Once, I was sued for a mistake in the nursing record. I was helpless and worried. Fortunately, the Nursing Department Supervisor, Director Lee, Dr. Wang and head nurse Huei-Lan helped me and accompanied me to face the problem together. I also thank Sister Yen for her support. Now I use my own experience to teach junior nurses how to write nursing record.

"Write down what you have done, what you said, and every single detail."

A nursing record is very important; do not ignore its power. I am thankful that the big family of Tzu Chi gives me warmth,



encouragement and support. I believe encouragement is a vital stimulant and support is the nutrient for mental growth.

### **Patients' Recognition As Assurance**

When I was still a novice, my injection technique was poor and I often received complaints from senior nurses and family members. After years of training, my technique has improved. Now, some patients even request that I do the injection for them.

Many patients with chronic illness are admitted to the unit repeatedly. The patients along with their family and caregivers have known me since I first came here. They trust me and let me take care of them. This is a great encouragement to me. A patient's family told me that his grandmother kept asking about me when she was admitted to another ward. I almost cried with emotion when I heard the story.

Nowadays, whenever I go out to distribute medicine, my cart would be loaded with candies and fruits from patient's families. They sometimes cook soup for me, or praise me for my service. One night, when I was helping a junior nurse to write the daily report, a patient's family with two young children came to the nurse station and cheered us up. It was such a nice cheer! The junior nurse asked me why I was able to stay in this job for so long. I told her because I could not find



**"If a person wants to do something, he will find a way to do it." Chien-Hao Chen has learned from many mistakes and gained the trust of patients and their families.**

a reason to leave, and the patients and their families are so nice that I can't bear to leave.

I am very thankful to my supervisors, senior nurses, doctors, volunteer mom, my patients, their families and caregivers. I will remember their kindness forever.

Everyone has gone through these trials. If a person does not want to stay, he will find an excuse; but if a person is willing to stay, he will find a way to overcome the difficulties. If I had quit at that time, I would not be able to share my feeling with others. Nursing is not as boring or tedious as people think; it is a fulfilling profession. It has enriched my life.



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## A Pioneer Male Nurse in Taiwan

When I was in college, I often had to answer questions concerning my major. In many occasions, people mistook my answer as “physics” instead of “nursing” (in Mandarin the two terms sound alike). I stopped explaining after many tries in vain. In fact, some twenty years ago, it was difficult to convince people that there were male students in the nursing department. However, I was a male nursing student in the Nursing Department of Fu Jen Catholic University. There were 27 male students in our class of 47. That runs against the stereotype belief of many people at that time. I was like a pioneer. After I finished my nursing education, I bravely stepped into the field of clinical nursing.

Because of my gender, I am a minority in the field. The working environment required me to be “fully utilized”. The benefits of those extra assignments essentially helped me to broaden my experience and build up my confidence.

### **Create the Opportunity of Being Needed**

I remembered there was a case of attempted suicide. It was just natural that I was assigned to the case because I was the only male nurse in the Emergency Department. The incident ended smoothly though I was harmlessly kicked several times by the patient. Looking back, if a female nurse had handled the case, she could have suffered bodily injuries.

Working in the Emergency Room is a very challenging job. Not only will one take care of a variety of patients, one must also comply with many government regulations. I can still clearly remember one of the special challenges.



**Hsin-Lung Lin accepted the new challenge as teaching supervisor in the Nursing Department at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital. Picture shows Lin with colleagues in the Elderly Experiences Class.**

I was working in an evening shift that day. At about 10p.m., ER information center received an alert of traffic accident on the freeway. ER staffs were instructed to be ready for “Dead on Arrival” patients. When the patient arrived, his skull was broken and his head was knocked out of shape; there was no vital sign. So, we cleaned up the patient and sent him to the funeral rites hall, waiting for his family’s arrival. Shortly after midnight, I was dismissed from ER and ready to go back to my dormitory. Just as when I stepped into the elevator, my phone rang.

“Lin, the police came and requested breathalyzer test for the patient we just sent to the rites hall. What should we do?”

“I will be back shortly.” I answered.

I rushed back to the ER and gathered

the necessary equipments for blood drawing. Then, I went back to the rites hall with a junior female nurse. Even though I was an experienced nurse through many complicated life rescue cases, but drawing blood from a dead body, at midnight, in the funeral rites hall was my first time. Luckily, there was a junior partner by my side and that provided enough encouragement. According to the anatomical location, I spotted the femoral artery and inserted the needle. Fortunately, I got enough blood on the first try. Mission accomplished! I hope I will never have to carry on such an assignment.

## **Solid Training in Emergency Department**

It has been 18 years since I first graduated from college in 1994. After college, I started my career in the training center of the hospital Emergency Department. The first three days on the job, there were CPR cases everyday. Because DOA (Dead-On-Arrival, which is now referred OHCA, Out-of-Hospital-Cardiac-Arrest) occurred every day. It was a true challenge to my credential, for I scored full mark when I was an intern at the Taipei Veteran Hospital

Because of my passion in emergency services, I took all kinds of training available in the emergency field. In 2000, I received my ACLS Certificate (Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support). For years, I

served in the emergency area as well as in clinical training and research, so that I could help young novices when they enter the field.

In order to be closer to my parents and hometown in southern Taiwan, I took the position as Deputy Head Nurse in the Emergency Department at the newly established Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital in 2001.

### **Gray Hairs from Teaching**

Three years ago, I took on the position of teaching supervisor – the mission of passing on the knowledge of nursing. My supervisor told me that the new teaching assignment is a perfect position for me, “Teaching is a chaotic and considerate job, which is suitable for your detail-minded personality.” For some reason, even till today, I still have a feeling of been cheated.

However, as I walk along the path, I gradually find that teaching really needs a clear logic and courage for innovation. In addition, a group of good companions are around me all the time. With the hard work of the entire group, we developed a platform for training and internship for nursing personnel. Even though my hair has turned gray through the years, my wisdom has also grown with time.

During the new nursing staff orientation, I often raised a question – What is nursing? For the majority of the new students, there is no answer. Indeed, this is a hard question to answer. Nursing is such a broad field. It is an all-inclusive job; from routine paperwork to life-saving procedures, our job indeed encompasses many little things. So the answer could also be very simple. In Taiwanese speaking, “nursing” sounds like “to take care of



Photo depicts Lin supervises CPR practice.





you” or “give you”. For me, it’s to say that nursing profession satisfies the physical, mental, spiritual and social needs of the patients.

During my sophomore year in college, we were set to design our department emblem. When we were gathered for brainstorming, the words of our department head were in everybody’s mind. She said: “The key of nursing can be summarized into three Cs – Care, Concern and Compassion.” Nursing is not just the physiological care of the patients. Take care of your patients with empathy, solve their problems with love, and, share their sorrows and pains. In fact, this is the basic principles of all the religions.

Now, all of the hospitals in Taiwan are in short of nurses. Because of this, many hospital beds are being eliminated. The reasons of nurse shortage are many; work overload, training, and lack of recognition

are the three major ones. Among them, training is the key and should be placed as a major part of nursing education. Currently, the government is planning for two-year training for all new nurses. However, this program is significantly different from that of the training of physicians. For medical doctors, they usually take three years of training before they enter their specialty fields. But for nurses, they are expected to perform as fully trained experienced professionals in just a few months. This is the true challenge of the nursing training programs.

Even though the path of nursing seems to be full of challenges, a professional nurse should stick to the basic principles and provide the best care possible to patients.

I met my lifetime partner here and together we build our sweet family. Soon, I will finish my graduate studies. I treasure everything I have and I am grateful for the assistance provided by Tzu Chi. “What is nursing?” From Dharma Master Cheng Yen’s instruction, I answer to myself: “When there is will, there is a way.” When the clouds are cleared, there will be light. I will continue to do my best to serve my patients and help the new nurses in enriching their knowledge and professional skills. Eventually, we will reach our goal of benefiting those who need our care.



**Hsin-Lung Lin hopes to attract more and more new recruits into the emergency care service. With nearly 20 years in the field of nursing, Lin treasures everything he has. Picture shows Lin's entire family. His wife is also a head nurse.**