

Dharma Water Purifies Nursing Education

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Several teachers from the nursing department of Tzu Chi's education mission attended the "Propagating Jing Si Dharma Path and Tzu Chi Spirit" retreat held by Tzu Chi Foundation during the National Independence Day (Taiwan) weekend. The class materials were substantial and diversified. The attendees were fortunate to witness Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, granddaughter of President Roosevelt, awarding Master Cheng Yen with the "Outstanding Public Service Award". During the ceremony, all the attendees applauded with excitement and a standing ovation. It is the first time that such an award is granted to an overseas recipient. Master Cheng Yen is also awarded a Humanity Honorary Doctoral Degree by the University of Eastern Philippines. Although Master Cheng Yen has been awarded numerous times, she has always maintained that the honors belong to all Tzu Chi volunteers. Deeply committed to the philosophy of "For Buddhism and for all sentient beings", she always leads by example and thus establishes the Jing Si Dharma Lineage and the Tzu Chi Dharma Path.

Through this annual retreat, the teachers, nursing department heads and staff broadened their understanding of nursing principle of delivering nursing care based on humanity and integrity. With the spiritual guidance of the dharma, nursing students can cultivate their knowledge and intuitive ability.

Not only do we need to learn from the dharma, we must also put it into action. For example, a senior nurse from Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital

Teachers of Tzu Chi University Nursing Dept. designed service courses and guided students to do basic cleaning for patients so they'd know better before their internship. And these courses took place in their own spare time.



volunteers to let new graduates practice intravenous injections on her so patients would not have to tolerate inexperienced hands. The true story of self-experimenting and sacrifice is an example of the Buddhist philosophy, and it continues to inspire many in the Tzu Chi education system.

Ten to twenty years ago, there was no equipment to practice the N-G tube technique. The head of the Gastric and Intestine Internal Medicine Department of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital allowed new graduates to practice on her. As a result, the new staff had hands-on practice before performing the technique on patients. As a remarkable role model, she went through the pain and suffering the patients go through during this procedure. The head nurse is now an ordained monastic at the Jing Si Abode. Looking at this petite master sitting in front of me reminds me of the true meaning of nursing humanity.

Nursing and the Tzu Chi Dharma path share many similar values. One of those is the emphasis on action. One can truly understand nursing by means of doing. Every year, Tzu Chi nursing education provides a variety of classes on different topics from critical illness care to community care and outreach health services. Students realize the true meaning of nursing humanity by practicing and learning the art of nursing care. Every link in the training process is a key that enable students to become competent nurses. Designing a service-learning class is a time consuming process. Teachers' devotion and effort in the class is best role model for students.

Teachers not only teach in the classrooms but also lead students to practice at various locations. Through service-learning classes, students learn empathy and methods of caring from being in contact with patients and families. Due to an aging population and low birth rate, the increase of senior citizens has changed geriatric care towards a prevention care. With the cooperation of the health department at Lanyu, more nursing students can participate in community outreach. Basic nursing care is a fundamental principle of nursing education. It is also the key to holistic medical care that prioritizes patients' needs.

In addition to teachers, every senior nurse is also a teacher. Every staff member is both a friend and a teacher. The principle – Patient First & Holistic Care – may appear simple but it is a lifetime learning goal for us as health care providers. As we age and our wisdom increases, we all interpret this principle from different angles. During the three-day retreat, students have learned more about nursing humanity and dharma. In sickness, both body and mind are imbalanced. Similarly, nurses can easily be annoyed with “asura” (a state of anger) attitude under life-threatening situations. Before becoming professionals, student nurses must understand the concept of bridging nursing care and humanity into lifelong learning.



Tzu Chi University student nurses took volunteer service courses and followed the lead of senior hospital volunteers that they'd learn better the right attitude towards the sick and suffering.