



Shu-Chin Chen,

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The Blissful Head Nurse

Shu-Chin Chen, a seasoned nurse with thirty-three years of experience, began her affiliation with Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital in 2007. The first greeting she received from Tzu Chi volunteers while first day on the job was, “Are you one of our sisters?” “I am the head nurse of ER,” She replied. “Are you certified?” Shu-Chin, who was unacquainted with Tzu Chi at the time, was pleasantly surprised to be mistaken as a Tzu Chi commissioner.

On the Front Line

When graduated from Fooyin College of Nursing (now Fooyin University) in 1979, Shu-Chin faced recruitment from the newly established Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, selecting 10 fresh graduates from the academic top 20. Her supervisor, the interviewer, encouraged her, “You are a all-round achiever, why not take a shot at ER?” A competitor she is, Shu-Chin joined Chang Gung at the age of twenty, with the first five years in Linkou and the rest in Keelung until retirement.

First day on the job, Shu-Chin encountered a case of “one corpse, two lives”. A pregnant woman was hit by a gravel truck in Taoyuan, and in spite of emergency treatment, passed away soon after. She had never forgotten the scene and the emotion despite been 30 years ago. “Everyone in ER was in tears. It was shortly after



With her rich and solid nursing experience, Shu-Chin Chen(right) offers practical assistance to the novices.



noon. The head nurse at the time, who was also in tears, reminded me to take a lunch break,” Shu-Chin said. “I was not afraid. I just hoped to be on the frontline and save lives.” She subsequently encountered several mass casualty incidents, including school bus fire and tour bus accident, where the patients were sent to Chang Gung for emergency treatment. Shu-Chin stood on the frontline every time.

In the hectic career of grassroots nurses, setbacks and discouragement are unavoidable. Shu-Chin, however, always found the strength to endure. Two years into nursing, she encountered a gentleman, most likely in his 60’s, lying painfully on the ground, grasping his chest, while on her way to work. The pedestrians seemed to fail to notice. After a briefly inquiry, she assumed the problem to be cardiac-related and stayed behind attending to the patient while waiting for ambulance. Her assumption was accurate. The patient was later diagnosed with acute myocardial infarction, and the subsequent cardiac catheterization and treatment saved his life in the nick of time. Once again, Shu-Chin comprehended the significance of being a nurse: applying professional knowledge at the scene of life and death. It is both a mission and the meaning of life itself.



Shu-Chin Chen is very proud of her years on the frontline, saving lives. Photo shows Shu-Chin and Master De Man prayed for patients in Jing Si Abode during the 2010 Buddha Bathing Ceremony.

From Crisis to Opportunity

A bottleneck of Shu-Chin's nursing career surfaced during her third year with Chang Gung. "I got married, and the family wished me to find another job. Maybe work as a public employee that doesn't require triple shifts." However, when she told her supervisor about her intention to resign, the supervisor persuaded not to by recognizing her talents, "There are two types of people that catch my eye: the ones with superior ability and the ones with poor performance. Your performance was very impressive. Would you like to take the leadership training?" Shu-Chin digested the suggestion carefully. Upon discussion with the family and husband, and considering the prospect at Chang Gung, a newly founded hospital, she took the challenge. In six months time, Shu-Chin went through the intensive care trainings in pediatrics, cardiology and cardiac surgery, and was promoted in her fourth year. Because of the regular work schedule, her husband and family accepted her job.

Chang Gung initiated an advanced promotion system in 1985. Shu-Chin worked diligently to obtain her N4 certification, and, on the same year, was promoted to the head nurse of the Emergency Room. When she first assumed administrative role, she was young and inexperienced, which caused constant tension between her and her colleagues. But, with the advise and company of the seniors, she approached her colleagues more as a friend and less as a superior. Whenever special tasks arise, she would respect their opinions and discussed thoroughly with them before deciding. Many problems were solved smoothly after consensus arrived among co-workers. With such an approach, the staff would treat each other as family members and accomplish assignment as a team.

The management of the nursing department appreciates Shu-Chin's ability and pushing her to become a supervisor, to which she hesitated. "My interest lies in clinical work," She replied. After accumulated a decade of experience, in 1993, she finally agreed to try. To become a supervisor requires a long rotating training. For every two years she worked alternately as head nurse in the department of general surgery, internal medicine and gastrointestinal hematology. The only question she had during the period was the frequent rotation: She would rotate every two years, while others every three to five years. "Because you came from ER, you are the fire brigade!" they answered. When the moment of decision arrived, Shu-Chin chose ER, following her passion in clinical work. With 26 years on the job, she retired as a head nurse.



Passing on the Torch

Upon retirement in 2007, Shu-Chin received a call from an old friend, asked her to consider a managerial opening in Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital. With all three children grown up and a lot to offer, she agreed. Coincidentally, the ER head nurse requested for a transfer, Shu-Chin once again assumed the role of head nurse in ER.

Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, a newly founded hospital at the time, was short on nurses all around. Shu-Chin faced the toughest time in her career as a supervisor. For clinical operation to run smoothly and for patients to receive proper care, she would step up to the front line and leave administrative work to after hours. First to work and last to leave, working 12 hours daily, Shu-Chin believed that a supervisor should lead by example. Fortunately with the assistance from work and at home, she overcame the hardship and expanded the ER staff from 32 to 48.

With the short-term task accomplished, the hospital requested her strength one more time. In Feb. 2012, she was transferred to 9B ward, housing patients from urology and ENT, when it was severely shorthanded. Two years passed, the ward had not seen a single employee resigned. It even went from 18 staff to 19. The team was not only capable of handling its own operation, but also provides timely backup to other wards. How did they accomplish that?

Shu-Chin did not conceive the achievement as a miracle. "My associates can talk to me for anything they like to talk. They can discuss with me concerning their work, their personal life, etc. That creates harmony within our unit." said she. Perhaps she used to treat her coworkers as sisters, and now that she was older, she would approach others as a mother, sharing and discussion nursing experiences, offering vivid examples that would help others to memorize and comprehend.

Shu-Chin's superiors often asked her: "Head nurse is not an easy job. How can you stick on it for so long? Why did you not seek for promotion?" Her answer was that in her mind, the interaction with patients and their families are the sweetest reward. Once she hears a patient tells her that: "Seeing your smile, my illness is half recovered", she gains all the energy required to stay on the job. Patients like to see her, colleagues like to talk to her, because she is trustworthy, she is proud of her work. She always does her best and set example for the others, she satisfies with her life and her enthusiasm in her profession.



Since joining Tzu Chi, Shu-Chin Chen spends her spare time on public services, contributing her share of love for the disadvantaged. Photo shows her and other participants who served in the 2007 Indonesia free clinic.

Seize the Moment

Shu-Chin's eldest son is now a medical school student, apparently influenced by his mother. Her other sons are inclined towards electrical engineering, more like their father. In 2004, they all witnessed their mother performed CPR to save the life of a drowning victim. "That is what I can do, and I must do it." said she. Even though Shu-Chin is no longer with the emergency unit, she is still very proud to have been one, rushing to save lives just as she always have been.

Shu-Chin journeyed into Tzu Chi when the medical environment was problematic and, perhaps unexpected by her, brought stability to the hospital and exemplar for the newcomers. First year in Tzu Chi she participated in the free clinic in Indonesia, distributing material with other volunteers, and experienced the selfless attitude of Tzu Chi first-hand; she also joined numerous Tzu Chi activities in the hospital, such as Buddha bathing ceremony and send clothing to Syria. Shu-Chin was particularly fond of the Jing-Si Aphorism, "It is never too late for a deep-rooted affinity to blossom; do not worry over a distant journey as long as one finds the way". Now that the operation is smooth, she decided to join commissioner training and be certified at the end of the year.

Shu-Chin said that she would participate in public service activities as much as time allows, providing assistance to the unfortunates. The Jing Si Aphorism, "Being needed by others, and having the ability to serve, is what makes our life truly blessed" can summarize Shu-Chin's life perfectly.