



What Are You Worried About?

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*“Flowers will wither, and waves will recede,
Lights will dim, so what are you worried about?
Scars will fade, and wounds will heal,
Despair will stop, so why are you brooding?”*

It was 3:30am on October 8th, 2012 and I just came home after my evening shift at the hospital. I was listening to the song “What are you worrying about” by Sodagreen, and the lyrics reminded about the conversation I had with my colleague earlier.

My colleague had worked at the hospital for about five years and was debating whether to pursue a career in management or to become a nurse practitioner. He asked for my advice, and I replied by asking him what his thoughts are on the ideal manager and nurse practitioner.

Piecing thoughts together, he concluded, “Forget it, the nursing work condition at large is in such a rotten state now, and managers are always hated by their subordinates. I think I better take the nurse practitioner route.”

“Well, it’s not necessarily so. As long as you like to communicate with others and solve problems when they arise, I think the managerial position is a good match. See, our work has slowly improved recently.” As I finished my thoughts he looked at me with doubts and contempt, as if saying that I better explain myself about these improvements.

So I continued, “Think about it, pharmacists no longer come to nursing station to interrogate you on the medication and force you to sign for it? Nowadays when you need to request for the Influenza testing kit, can you not just have the request form directly delivered to the labs, instead of first filling out the form online (*Annotation 1), await for the delivery center staff to come pick up the form, and then wait again for them to go to the labs to collect the testing kit? Isn’t our medical record management more efficient and complete after switching to the electronic platform? Can’t you now rely on the Smart Mobile Cart to provide the most updated medication records for patients without going back to the nursing station? Can’t you now lock the emergency cart so you don’t have to do inventory on every shift takeover and instead only do it once every two weeks or whenever it is being used again? Also...”As I went on I saw his eyes lit up and nodded in agreement.



Had I not recounted the details of the changes, my colleagues would not have realized that, the many, albeit slow, simplifications and improvements of nursing workflow.

Actually only this past May I became the Assistant Head Nurse of the Attending Unit and started to participate in management tasks. Memories of colleagues' hardwork, the enormous and miscellaneous business scope, and work challenges and stress are still deeply branded in my mind. When I knew the managers of nursing unit had been actively seeking improvements to relieve staff stress I provided many ideas and opinions, which surprisingly were also resonated by the managers.

Therefore after reaching consensus and many meetings and discussions, a Mind Map (*Annotation 2) was created to systemically categorize the opinions and improvement measures from each unit head. With this we were able to accomplish the task of simplifying our clinical colleagues' workflow. Looking at the Mind Map many unit heads were shocked at the work and stress enormity that could have been simplified. It was no wonder why many colleagues could not get off work on time.

Nursing workflow involved interactions with doctors, pharmacists, social workers, clerks, delivery staff, information management personnel, etc. Hence if improvements were to be made in nursing workflow, cooperation and coordination would be needed from all these other departments. My head started to hurt when I thought about inviting all the department heads for meeting and discussion; is this even possible? If improvements were not made, does that mean the nursing staff has to continue to work in stress and provide inefficient labor?

In order to promote this improvement proposal, Director Chang Shu-Chuan of Nursing Department continuously invited other involved department heads from Information Management, General Operations, Pharmacy, Internal and Surgical Medicine, Respiratory Therapy, etc. to meet and discuss the best ways to resolve issues faced by Nursing staff.

Throughout the communication and interaction many different opinions and belief systems clashed, even to the point where it felt like the meeting would erupt into heated fights. But Director Chang remained calm, upholding "patient centered" belief, continued on with bravery and wisdom, resolving many conflicts and issues. This led to a greater understanding and close cooperation

between the nursing unit and other departments and allowed simplification of nursing staff's workflow so that they may spend more time with patients and their families.

I guess, this is the characteristics of an established hospital: "Abundant resources and meticulous procedures but less flexible to changes and requires more efforts." If it were not for this meeting I would not have known that to change nursing staff's workflow would be such a complicated process with so much efforts and involvement.

This is the medical care backdrop of Taiwan -- nursing staff are like frogs poached in water slowly – little by little we become oblivious to our losing passion to our work. But the nursing unit heads in the hospital are still trying to improve the working conditions and put the fires out despite difficult circumstances. Perhaps it looks foolish but given the chance we will still strive to make attempts and changes. The only worry we have is that our colleagues do not feel the changes and leave in disappointment.

Even if the environment for nursing staff is like a broken ceramic, the future will be shaped as we like when all of the nursing team is willing to keep faith and confidence to not to give up. I believe the future is bright, just like the ending of the song by Sodagreen: "Time never answers and life never brawls; I am not afraid even for a moment! It is moment after moment that comprises eternity..."

Annotation 1

Sending request: "Transporting center requesting system" belongs to Transporting Center of the General Operations (Delivery Center). Nursing staff of Tzu Chi Hospital fill out a completed "delivery request form" on the intranet and send it to the Delivery Center. The Delivery Center will then according to time needed to complete the request send delivery staff to fulfill requested tasks.

Annotation 2

Mind Map is a simple tool to effectively organize thoughts. It will concretize and systemize seemingly unrelated but enormous thought processes. It is often used for creative thinking, project planning, problem analysis, meeting management, etc.