

Good Nurses Shine with Love

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Leaving the bright sunshine behind, I walked into a hospital in Taidong to present my research paper to a medical conference held there. During the break, a familiar but long forgotten face came up to me in her chief nurse white suit. Without any hesitation I called out her name, “Xiao-Zhen”, she exclaimed, “Dr. Chu!”

While we were chatting, I learned that she had received complete nursing profession training at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital after graduating from Tzu Chi College of Nursing (the predecessor of Tzu Chi College of Technology). She then returned to her hometown Taidong armed with nursing experience and skills to serve her hometown folks.

She told me that she really misses and appreciates her days back at the college and at the Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. Those were the days when she was tested under a well-qualified nursing program. It made her more adept at her field today.

We did not chat for long but I certainly noticed the once teenager had matured, with a true passion toward the nursing profession as well as a profound love for her hometown. I can also tell that she is widely respected by her colleagues. I was much moved.

Xiao-Zhen was a student of an earlier class. She had a dark complexion that is typical of Aboriginal Taiwanese. But that wasn't why she had made such an impression on me, an impression that



has lasted to today. It was her optimism that made her unforgettable. She kept her smiles despite her weak academic performance. Her lack of solid elementary and middle school education resulted in her struggle with the fundamental medical courses she took in the nursing program. She worked hard but was still far from meeting the basic required grades.

She failed a class I was teaching. I gave her a make-up exam but still didn't pass. She would lose her subsidy for tuition and living costs as an ethnic minority from the government if her grades did not meet the minimum academic standard. Some of her teachers came to speak on her behalf but I turned down all pleas. Back then I saw myself as a guardian for then patients. If I allow such a lousy nursing student to pass without sufficient nursing knowledge, how in the future can she provide quality nursing work for patients? With self-righteous attitude, I flunked her.

I didn't know nor care how she resolved her financial issues. She still nevertheless greeted me with her innocent smile whenever we saw each other on campus. Eventually she graduated from nursing school and took internship at the Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. Although we were working at the same hospital, we were in different departments and for years we never had the chance to meet each other again, until now.

Seeing Xiao-Zhen again and remembering her past has struck me to think deeply. I still keep in touch with some of Xiao Zhen's classmates on Facebook and know their whereabouts. The ones that were overachievers back in nursing school had all left the nursing profession to work in other fields.

Certainly there are many reasons to leave the nursing profession but I can't help but to ask the question -- what kind of nurse students will most likely persist on this path? I begin to question the values of my judgments that I used to hold as to what makes a good nurse. What kind of student would make a good nurse? Do academic grades indicate and dictate one's future?

I think Xiao-Zhen's appearance has just answered my question. She is passionate, energetic, positive, optimistic, unyielding to difficulties and setbacks, and full of love and empathy toward others; all these are fundamental personal characteristics in casting a good nurse. It reminded me of a quote from Corinthians 1:27, in the Bible "... but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong."

One of the missions of Tzu Chi College of Technology is to help underprivileged Aboriginal Taiwanese youngsters join the nursing profession, so that they not only can support themselves but also are be able to help others. However, based upon historical economic and cultural factors, it has been very difficult for minority students to learn sufficiently before entering the medical field. This makes their medical studies especially difficult. Nevertheless, with such adversary conditions students have been successful and had developed the will to preserve and overcome hardships, the bravery to face frustrations, the attitude to learn with humility, and eventually achieve and develop an optimistic attitude toward life. These are not only the essential



Dr. Chu sees a patient at the free clinic held by Tzu Chi Medical Association in Jingpu Village, Fongbin Township, and Hualien County. On his left side is a nurse from the Yuli Campus of Tzu Chi Hospital.

characteristics for any good nurse but also the bases which support continuous commitment to the career.

So as a teacher I ought not to judge the future of any nursing students solely on their academic achievements. I would instead guide and lead them with patience and love and to walk along side with anyone with difficulties. In this way, I foster opportunities for them to turn their present hardship into joyful fruits in the future. Take Xiao Zhen as an example, I believe there must have been a very wise teacher who helped her through the rough times; a teacher who not only helped her but also cultivated her potentials to become a dedicated nurse. This is a blessing not only for Xiao Zhen but for her patients as well.

There are quite a number of Taiwanese Aboriginal nurses in my clinic. They help me at work and fill the workplace with much happiness and joy. A doctor can only do so much without the help of nurses. Very often, people value medical professionals solely by their positions, treating some as important while others as secondary. However, medical professionals should change their thinking that nurses are subordinating as compared with doctors. Doctors, especially, should pay due respect to the nursing staff. Only when nurses and doctors are treating each other with mutual respect and understanding, can they work together seamlessly in delivering the best healthcare to benefit patients, their families, and those who work with them.