



Cherish the Elders Around You

**Narrated by: Mei-Chi Sun, Home care nurse,
Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital**





I have been serving at Kuanshan Tzu Chi Hospital for 14 years, enjoyed taking care of others since childhood. As a child, when I saw my neighbors played the naughty horse-fighting game, I would suggest them to play the pretend game instead. Then I'd be a nurse and picked weeds from the street as herbs, I used a piece of cloth pretending to help other kids wrapping their wounds with herbs. Growing up, I did go to the nursing school. One of the goals is to share the financial burden for my family so that my younger sisters and brothers could go to school. What I had in mind at the time was simply to earn enough money to support the family.

"Once I did regret becoming a nurse, not because the work was hard but because I had to face reality of the human nature." When I first joined Tzu Chi hospital, I worked at the ward for nearly five years. Then I transferred to work as a home care nurse at the public health department. During this time, I encountered various types of patients' families. Some families would start fighting for the inheritance while the elders were still being treated in the emergency room; some families would leave the elders with no support, even let them sleep in the storage room. After observing all these, I realized that I should continue to be a nurse so that I could provide care for more of these lonely elders. When I met the cases that needed financial aid, I would send some medical devices donated by charities to the elders, such as sputum suction machine and medical airbed, etc. If the patients were disabled, I would buy some groceries and household supplies for them. All I think of is that I'd do my best to help the elders.

There is an old woman, who had a stroke

21 years ago, has been on bed since she suffered from bone fracture 7 years ago. She does not have any children; therefore, she can only depend on her aging husband to take care of her. Besides relying on the subsidies for low-income households for living, her husband also rides a bicycle to collect used bottles and paper every day. He used the money earned from recycling to buy the urinary catheters for her needs. The husband never complained about the situation and continued to take good care of his wife. Each time I came to help change the old woman's urinary catheter; he always sincerely thanked her for her efforts. He even brought the longan fruit he grew to the hospital to share with me. Even though they did not have a lot of money, I was touched by the old man's deep appreciation from his heart.

Being a home care nurse, the responsibility is not only to take good care of the patients physically, but also to serve as a communication channel for patients' caretakers by listening to their frustration and complaints will help them release stress. Constantly facing the family elders who need long-term care, caretakers are often burned-out physically and mentally. I would spend time for them to vent their frustration, and started to share my own story to show support and to bring up courage to them as caretakers:

I came from the A-Mei tribe located in Taitung City and got married at the age of twenty. After marriage, I and my husband lived with the big family with eight members. The household included three generations: my parents-in-law, grandparents-in-law, and my husband's younger brothers. With our kids born, it became a family with four generations. I was totally very busy in taking care of the



As an aboriginal, Ms. Mei-Chi Sun takes good care of her family and her tribal patients.

family. In addition to the children and the household, I who worked as a nurse, naturally became the one to take care of the health of everyone in the big family.

My grandfather-in-law was disabled from stroke at his thirties. I started to take care of him soon after the marriage. It was quite a burden for me, especially when he became incontinent and could not control his temper. Later he could only lie on the bed due to a bone fracture. In addition to give me hard time constantly, he did not allow others to clean his bedpan. He even threw dirty diapers and put foul stool all over the place for me to clean up. During that time, every day after working in the hospital, I rushed to buy food from the supermarket and prepared dinner for the entire family. After dinner, I had to bath and cleanup him before doing chores. I was frustrated with the heavy workload. But once I realized that I was the only person in the family who had the profession, I decided to put up with it.

I put all her efforts to take good care of my grandfather-in-law until he died. Others might think my burden was lifted, but I actually felt very sad after he died. Regardless, I had been living

together with him for over ten years. The grief on my grandfather-in-law was gradually diverted towards the concerns about the welfare for my eighty-year-old grandmother-in-law and my aging parents-in-law. At the moment, despite of my grandmother-in-law has chronic disease with limited mobility; she could take care of herself without help. Our children were then big enough to take care of themselves without having me worried. Thus, I'm quite content with about what I can enjoy now.

I am experienced in taking care of the elders. I comprehend deeply about the feeling that some parents who do not want to become a burden to their children and are afraid to be left alone. Although I have been bearing lots of stress from taking care of elder family members since I was young, the time was still filled with joy, making me realize that "The elders in the family are precious". I gained valuable lessons about how to deal with the challenges of every day's life. I learned to be grateful and appreciate what I have. Therefore, I deeply felt that everyone ought to treat his/her parents with respect and to treasure each and every moment they could have together.