



A Spinal-Bent Over 180° Man Stands Straight Again

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Photo depicts Mr. Xiao-Dong Yang first arrived in Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital looking distant and avoided eye contact.

My care for Mr. Xiao-Dong Yang inspired me the meaning of “Learn from Illness”.

Tzu Chi foundation brought Xiao-Dong from Xiamen, China, to Hualien, Taiwan not only to seek medical treatment for scoliosis with over 180 degree bent on the spine, but also to unlock his own solitary confinement because of the illness.

A Sympathetic Story - Safeguarding the Mind and the Body

When we first heard of Xiao-Dong, a 31 year-old male restricted to wheelchair because of severe spinal deformity. I imagined his condition was impeding for the daily chores. After I saw Xiao-Dong performing his daily chores - getting on and off the bed with only his two powerful arms, I thought of him as a person with great fortitude. I greatly sympathized for such a young person deprived of his golden years and struggling with the disease for years.



Xiao-Dong was very shy and defensive, always wearing his sunglasses, hat, and a mask. He never made eye contact with us especially when discussing his condition; only responded by nodding or shaking his head. The lack of communication hindered our progress. Despite a decade of isolation, our volunteers worked together to care for his physical well-being along with the mental support that will lead him to the right path for recovery.

Endure the Painful Therapy with Positive Attitude

Xiao-Dong's postoperative care was similar to a hip replacement surgery but with additional focus on muscle relaxation and physical therapy. His face revealed the painful encounter for post-operative recoveries, muscle stretch and physical therapy. He vowed to complete his commitment for physical rehabilitation in order to stand upright.



Every member of the medical team held a farewell party for Mr. Xiao-Dong Yang's regained health.

We were delighted to see him gaining grounds, and his attitude had turned positive. No more hat, sunglasses or mask, Xiao-Dong had become comfortable in front of people, including interacting with the people caring for him.

Reborn and Giving

Xiao-Dong scoliosis is the worst case scenario I had ever treated during my seven years of practice. He enabled me to compare the practical symptoms and surgical flow with the documented theories, and learned how to focus care during various stages of prognosis. Along with the instructions and advice from Dr. Ing-Ho Chen, the Honorary Superintendent of the Hospital, my expertise had increased tremendously.

Xiao-Dong's lack of human interaction due to the long time isolation was transformed by Tzu Chi senior medical volunteer Huei-Mei Yen. The study of Jing-Si Aphorisms and Tzu Chi songs had made a difference. He became more confident, willing to share his feelings and always speak in gratitude.

We celebrated Xiao-Dong's recovery with these blessing: "Reborn in the family of Tzu Chi, may Xiao-Dong continue to cultivate on the path of bodhisattva to benefit other."

We were happy to see him progress with all the positives. Xiao-Dong still had to work hard with his 60 degree curvature at dismissal from the hospital. With all the well wishes, we strongly believe in his better future.



After surgery in Taiwan, Xiao-Dong Yang went back to Xianmen to live a normal life. Photo depicts Mr. Yang rehabilitates in a nearby park with her mom.