



EXPERIENCE THE NURSING PROFESSION IN THAILAND

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“Teacher, will we have opportunities for an exchange student or a study abroad program when we come to Tzu Chi University?”

The main goal of Tzu Chi University’s Nursing Department is to cultivate both humanistic spirit and professional nursing, and attract teachers and students from all around the world to initiate exchange and learning. Thailand is one of the most frequent student exchange countries because its nursing education resembles the European and American system; yet its national religion is Buddhism. Since there are also international students from Thailand’s Mahidol University, Tzu Chi University’s Nursing Department responded and began an International Nursing Curriculum in 2014.



Students from Tzu Chi University and Mahidol University are together attending a hospital free clinic for the refugees in Bangkok, Thailand.

We believe that medical professionals must be sensitive to cross-cultural care in order to develop apprehension toward cultures with different beliefs and religions so as to provide comprehensive care. Currently, immigrants from Southeast Asian countries coming to Taiwan are on the rise; as a result, medical care for the foreign labor workforce is also increasing in hospitals and within communities. When facing medical problems from these new immigrants, medical personnel must be vigilant in understanding culture to provide the best care.

Tzu Chi University and Mahidol University are sister schools. Since Chiang Mai University's Nursing Department is the cradle of care for Northern Thailand where the Northern Thailand Tzu Chi University is situated, our student exchange program mainly constitutes these two elite Thailand universities.



Bangkok, Thailand - International Refugee Free Clinic

Mahidol University, situated in capital Bangkok, is the first university in Thailand to have a nursing department. It is Thailand's premier nurses' producer and also one of the top 100 world renowned universities. Mahidol University created its nursing department in 1896, awarded bachelor degrees in 1956, created the first nursing graduate program in 1977, and established a post-doctorate program in 1989, besides an international nursing curriculum.

Tzu Chi University and Mahidol University became sister schools in 2005. On January 25, 2015, Tzu Chi Thailand started working conjointly with Ramathibodi Hospital of the Mahidol University. Under the assistance of the US State Department, Ramathibodi Hospital provided "Community Medical Free Clinic" to refugees once a month. Nursing students of Mahidol University also participate in the international refugee clinic.

When nursing students of Tzu Chi University participated with community nursing internship at Ramathibodi Hospital, they learned how to combine Thai, Chinese, and Western medicine to provide medical services to the public.



Associate professor Tsai Chuan-Hsiu led students to practice internship in Thailand.

Students also learned how to provide care and communication to those with different culture. While at the International Refugee Clinic, students also learned how to implement international medical care, and forming a solid foundation with international capability to take home.

Integrating Local Clinic – Chiang Mai, Thailand

Chiang Mai University is founded in 1964, and has the earliest nursing department in Northern Thailand. Chiang Mai University nursing education focuses on the environment and community care. In addition, it has an international nursing curriculum catered to international nursing care. The institution promotes international academic exchange, and plays an important role in influencing the nursing education and practice in neighboring countries. As a result, it is highly suitable for international health care exchange.

At Chiang Mai University, students can experience multi-national breastfeeding outpatients' service, community home care service, the integration of Thai medical health care in hospitals, and the multiple roles played by specialty Thai nurses.

Northern Thailand's Chiang Mai has a Tzu Chi humanistic school. During the exchange with Tzu Chi University, students may also work with Northern Thailand Tzu Chi Foundation to provide community outreach and student health care education.

Not a Native Thai Speaker, English Instead

Lin Yu-Hua, a junior in the nursing department, shared her learning experience:

“August 23, 2015 is Thailand's International Clinic Day. We arrived at 6 am to assist pediatric education and diabetic prevention promotion. This is my second time participating with Tzu Chi Clinic; however, this time around it is a larger international free clinic. With patients from different countries, translators are in demand. When we arrived, we faced many difficulties such as the communication barrier. We were unable to communicate with patients. However, through gestures and broken English and with translators' assistance, we were able to successfully complete the assignments. Despite the hectic process, it was an opportunity for us to speak English.”

Experience Medical Differences - Breaking the Stereotypes

Lin also shared her experience on medical and stereotypes:

“We visited many institutions that allowed us to see and compare Thai social



culture with ours. The myth that Thailand medicine is lagging behind is false. Perhaps in some areas we are ahead, however, I can only admire their creativity. Thailand is a creative and passionate country. Here I saw medical personnel using creativity and ingenuity in places such as the environment and their use of equipment. They strive to take patients' care to the next level. Most of the students have certain understanding of their country's education policy. This reminds us that we should pay more attention to Taiwan's medical education policy so we may provide creative and loving care to patients from Taiwan and other countries."

Avoid Prejudice - Enhance International Care Capability

Hu Yu-Shun, a junior in the Nursing Department, shared her opinion regarding her prior prejudice toward Thailand and the importance of international care capability:



Learning from Thailand counterparts provides the ability to experience the essence of international medical care.



“This program changed my negative stereotypes toward Thailand. I used to believe Thailand is an underdeveloped country. However, through this exchange and experience, I learned that it was my prejudice. The actual Thailand and my prior understandings are very different. Nurses treat patients with care and also creativity, which is what we need to learn. I hope that I will have the opportunity to study and intern abroad to further my international care capability.”

Internationalization has become the trend of global care. The 30 days overseas study allows students to have time to experience the medical care differences between Taiwan and Thailand. In addition, it allowed students to reflect on the essence of care from these differences. The experience of participating in international refugee clinics gave students the opportunity to see the health of refugees and the importance of health education. Breaking the stereotypes about Thailand’s negatives was another gain. Through the actual observation and participation, students can understand how Thailand uses case studies to facilitate the medical care to meet the needs of its residents.