

Thank You All, Tzu Chi Marrow Donation Volunteers

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More than ten years ago, I was a student in the City of Taipei. Quite often, I would walk around the Taipei Train Station. There, I would see a group of uniformed persons stopping the passersby. Not for long, I figured out they were there to promote blood registry for marrow donation of Tzu Chi Stem Cells Center. They would approach the passersby one by one to explain their causes. Naturally, they were refused by many. Finally, I realized that they were Tzu Chi volunteers for recruiting prospective bone marrow donors.

More than ten years passed, Tzu Chi volunteers are still active along the roads and streets around Taiwan. However, marrow donation of blood making stem cells becomes a more simple and easy process, similar to the ordinary blood donation.

I work in the relay ward for marrow transplantation patients. Part of my job is to take care of the voluntary marrow donors. During that period of time, marrow donors accompanied by groups of Tzu Chi volunteers came in every day. Volunteers accompanied



the donor to our nurse station. They announced, “Dear nurse, the donor is here!” Without any exaggeration, the donor would always be surrounded by more than two volunteers to the ward. While locating a matched donor and safe-guarding him/her through the whole donation process, the volunteers would be busy with their individual assignments. Some would prepare fruits, nutritious soups, clothing, and comfortable surroundings. And some would just chat with the donor to calm him/her down and relax. During the marrow donating process, the donor would have to stay put for about eight hours, volunteers would carefully monitor the position of the needle on the donor, the reaction of the donor, they would ask if the donor is hungry; does the donor need to go to the restroom; is there any discomfort... At the end, they waited till the technician completed the calculations to make sure that they enough cells were collected. They also waited to see if the donor needs a follow-up visit. Finally, as the technician announced the removal of the needle, they cheered the donor with “Congratulations, Good Job!” The volunteers would then serve the donor with the nutritious soup, which they prepared according to a recipe from the Chinese medicine doctor. The recipe was designed for the donor and carefully prepared by the volunteers. It was filled with the love of the volunteers and the whole team of the marrow donation personnel.



In the Pediatrics Department and the Marrow Transplant Ward, many of my patients need transplant of blood making stem cells. I remember that there was an eight-year-old child need marrow transplant urgently. Fortunately, we found a match in the Tzu Chi Stem Cells Center. However, the contact information of the donor was all changed. The volunteers did a carpet style search around the neighborhood and finally located the right person. After a detailed explanation, the volunteers convinced the donor to help the child. Thanks to the volunteers; the 8-year-old child had a chance for a bright future.

Occasionally, even after a match was found, the person refused marrow donation. Under such a circumstance, our volunteers always did their best to convince the person. They would explain that marrow donation was not just to save a patient's life; but could possibly save a family or even the patient's relatives.

I admire the marrow donation volunteers for their hard work, their patience and the diligence. They spend so much time and efforts to accomplish their goal without seeking anything in return. All they ask is to save a stranger's life. They go around different places, talk to all kinds of people, and just try to convince some strangers to give 10 cc of blood into the donor registry. They always want to do more for the needy. They are the Tzu Chi volunteers; they are the marrow donation volunteers, and they are the volunteer Bodhisattvas. Thank You All!