

# Create Elder Friendly Environment both in Hospital and Communities

When I first heard about our hospital agreed to be a testing ground for the Long-Term Care 2.0 by MOHW, the first thought that came to mind was: “this is a huge project, can we refuse it?” Of course, the thought was gone in an instant. What followed was that my team and I plunged into the preparation and planning for the Long-term Care intervention.

## From Nothing to Stabilizing

From establishing a long-term care center, joining seminars, and assisting in the tendering of home care of Chiayi County, to the lack of home caregivers, starting recruitment, streamlining operating processes, and seamless transitions... relentless challenges came our way one after another.

Like Master Cheng Yen once said, “vows beget strength.” In the wake of emerging obstacles, coupled with miscommunications among team members, in sweat and tears we refined our teamwork, build our hospital’s long-term care program from ground up, successfully recruited home caregivers, and cases started to pour in to the point where it is growing at a steady rate. All these achievements came from the accumulation of hard work from the team.

I remember when the long-term care center of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital started taking cases, I went with our home care supervisors and caregivers to visit the patients. Since all of our

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early cases are patients with complex issues, I thought I should be there so that our home caregivers would not have to face them alone. I remember it was an elderly woman paralyzed due to an automobile accident. Her family wanted the home caregiver to assist the woman with her bath daily, carry her into the bathroom alone, and to clean the house as well. After assessing the environment, we concluded that the house was too small to carry paralyzed patient on frequent basis, and that our responsibility was to the patient, cleaning the entire living space was simply unreasonable. When taking a case such as this, effective communication and coordination are vital to simultaneously provide appropriate care to our home patient and protect our home caregivers. Home care is, evidently, a task that is excruciatingly demanding. To reach a win-win situation all the time is something that we must continue striving towards.

### **Integrated Dementia Care Center**

Another long-term care service is day care center. We started our planning on community-based dementia prevention, and we were able to find a suitable location in



**In early August 2017, Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital agreed to undertake the integrated dementia care center of Chiayi County.**

the neighborhood. As the facility gradually approaches completion, intensive planning took place to set up the internal structure. We hope eventually we can achieve our intended goal of promoting health among community elders through the service we provide at the day care center.

The Health Promotion Administration has been promoting senior friendly certification for 6 years. It was estimated that by the end of 2017 the number of certified institutions (hospitals, health clinics, and senior centers) should reach 300. Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital was honored to receive the senior friendly excellence award for 5 consecutive years, and is still striving towards the original goal of providing senior care for community elders. From internal to external structure, from the hospital to the communities, Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital has implemented a series of continuous care programs.

Long-term care policy started with elders with disabilities, and has now progressed to the promotion of health among seniors. It is evident that the long-term care recipients are no longer limited to citizens who are ill and are in need of care, but to cover the entire senior population.



**The Health Promotion Administration has been promoting senior friendly certification for 6 years, and Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital was honored to receive the senior friendly excellence award for 5 consecutive years. From left: Deputy director Liao Hui-Yen, Vice Supt. Chien Jui-Teng.**

For example, to accommodate the demands of dementia prevention and care, the MOHW coordinated and integrated local governments, long-term care centers, hospitals, and social welfare institutions to establish 20 integrated dementia care centers around Taiwan. Dalin Tzu Cho Hospital Dementia Center, inaugurated in August, undertook the task of dementia care in Chiayi County. Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital began dementia care in as early as 2012, set up 14 dementia care locations from Changhua to Kaohsiung. The primary purpose of the integrated dementia care centers set up under the “Community Service Locations” in Long-Term Care 2.0 is the assistance of diagnosis and case management of suspected dementia cases, accompany caregivers with proper care and medical consultations, services, coordinations, referrals, and follow-ups at various stages of dementia, as well as assisting caregivers with the consultation and referral when dementia patients are acutely symptomatic.

The members of Chiayi County Integrated Dementia Care Center consisted of neurologist, family physician, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, clinical psychologist, dietitian, speech therapist, social worker, and Tzu Chi volunteers, fully capable of providing comprehensive service.

### **Healthy and Worry-Free Aging**

Geriatrics is one of the specialties of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital. Since the average age of most patients is 65, and the ratio of patients older than 80 or 90 is high, the department of nursing began implementing “aging simulation” program, hoping that young nursing staff can experience and empathize what aging feels like, including impaired mobility, blurry eyesight, struggling going up or down the stairs, via this program. Although the participants laughed at each other in class, the point had been put across. With a firsthand experience of aging, the nurses can be more empathetic towards their care recipients in their times of needs.

The hospital also launched community health centers in 2005, and also help other communities to start their own community health groups for seniors. There are current 7 locations. Aside from health education, the centers also offer recycling and handicrafts, which builds towards the physiological and psychological health of the community members. Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital has successfully taken senior friendly environment up a notch: not only should the hospital be senior friendly, the neighboring communities should be too.

There is a line imprinted into my mind—all of us age. I know what I do for elders now is in fact paving way for my own future, so I must be as thorough as I can in every regards. I hope to optimize my nursing capabilities to assist elders in needs to live a worry-free life.