

Heartwarming Experience at Toughest Time in Life

By Hsu Kai-Ting, 9B Ward Registered Nurse, Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital



Many cancer patients say to me, “When I face suffering, I have a feeling in my heart - there is no difference between the rich and the poor in this situation.”

When pain occurs, people walk into the hospital. For 365 days a year and 24 hours a day, they closely spend time with us - the first-line nurses. So, I often ask myself besides nursing care, what else can I provide them? What is our value?

A patient I nicknamed “Old Mr. Mo”, who felt like being reborn after out of his plight, gave me the answer.

Accompany Mr. Mo to Walk Out of Sickness and Live Confidently

In 2015 Old Mr. Mo was hospitalized as a tongue cancer patient. He was scheduled for a whole-day cancer surgery, an operation

collaborated by Otorhinolaryngology and Plastic surgery units. Since it requires longer time to complete, he was scheduled for the first one on that day. Old Mr. Mo's emotion was normal when he was first hospitalized. But on the day of the surgery, he suddenly started crying, and tightly held-on the quilt and pillow. We couldn't pull him out of the bed. He kept saying he didn't want to have the surgery. We had to inform his attending physician, Dr. Chou Yi-Fan, to suspend the operation and tried to understand his condition.

After having a talk with Old Mr. Mo, we began to understand his life story and his worries. After the 921 Earthquake (the disastrous one happened in Taiwan 1999), young Mr. Mo got divorced, and he also experienced the death of his son, due to bullies during his service in the army. His life was struck hard. Ten plus years passed. When he



Photo depicts Old Mr. Mo received the certificate from the ward that he finally finished the whole treatment process. And his hand-made craft decoration for the ward and the nursing station.



found something strange in his mouth, he first had a check-up at the hospital in Puli, Nantou County. The doctor in Puli told him he needed to go to a big hospital. However, he chose not to face it. He comforted himself by thinking it was no big deal, what he needed to do was go to a pharmacy and get some medicine. He took pain killers, and applied ointment to his mouth. After two to three months, the condition worsened. Then, he came to Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital.

What he feared most was after surgery without his tongue. How could he make a living? Would he die in the operation room? He was very afraid of these uncertainties. After learning why he refused operation, we requested help from social workers. The team gave him a full explanation of what would happen after the operation and what the team will provide to help him. He then felt relieved and had the surgery. After the operation, he had chemotherapy six times, and 30 doses of radiation. It was tough during several months' treatment. We were with him all the way through.

We discovered that Old Mr. Mo is talented; he was very good at crafts. So, we setup the ward as his display area. I invited him to the ward nursing station and said, "You



During an activity in 9B ward, Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital, Mr. Pong spoke to his wife with appreciation and love. Their relationship recovered ever since.

look around, if you find any spot boring here, please help us decorate it, every time you come here.” Therefore, he decorated the ward and our nursing station beautifully with his handcrafts.

Every time after chemo and radiation treatment, he would spend his free time doing some handcrafts. Old Mr. Mo was a person without much confidence. But I noticed his words were influential. When patients, who had treatment at the same period of time like him, were in troubles, I would tell him, “Someone needs help, please go talk to him.” We want him share his own feelings and experiences in order to help other patients have better understanding. Old Mr. Mo later realized his strength. Therefore, after a few times interacting with patients, I found him proactively “patrolling” the wards room by room. He asked patient friendly, “How do you feel today?” “You have mouth sores? That’s okay.” He became confident and a role player for other patients.

When he was certain of his strength, he started helping others. He knew he was capable of doing something. Mr. Pong was a patient who was deeply influenced by Old Mr. Mo. Also a tongue cancer patient, he was having treatment at the hospital while Old Mr. Mo’s treatments about to be over.

Helping Patients Reconcile with Family

Mr. Pong was a dominating and traditional Taiwanese man. And his wife was a traditional woman who was hard-working but unappreciated.

During Mr. Pong’s agonizing treatment process, he treated his wife even more badly. He was suffering and put his wife in a more difficult situation.

One day Mrs. Pong was crying in the tea room. She said, “I have done so much. I can’t do it anymore. He keeps scolding me. I want to go back to Pingtung. He rebuked me again. I don’t want to face him.” After releasing her emotion, she brought divorce papers to Mr. Pong.

“Sign the paper. I have been with you for 60 years. My relation with you ends here,” said Mrs. Pong.

“Sign what? What are you talking about?” Mr. Pong ignored her.

After work, I went to talk to Mr. Pong and asked him, “How do you feel after 60 years marriage with your wife? Is she important to you?” “Important or not, she knows”, he said.

“How could she know if you didn’t tell her? Do you love her?” I asked.

“Very much,” he replied.

I asked, “Why didn’t you say it?”

He replied, “Ah, I just couldn’t say it!”

Mr. Pong is hard to utter the word “love”. I wondered what to do?

Every Christmas eve we have a Christmas carol activity at the ward. My colleagues and I were thinking how we could help them by using this occasion. We knew, in fact, they rely on each other very much.

We bought flowers and dressed-up Mr. Pong like as a prince. We told him, “You couldn’t say it, but write it down.” We asked him to write down his love for his wife. We helped him to show his gratitude and regrets to his wife in public. The whole night, his wife acted like a little girl, “I have never received a flower in my life. I am overjoyed today,” she said. She smiled shyly. The night ended happily.

Next morning, during the treatment, I asked Mr. Pong, “Your wife is in a tough situation. Did you sign the paper? Life is too tough on your wife.” He did not speak. His face looked very serious. But his wife uttered, “Nothing! What paper? There is no paper!” I found their divorce paper underneath the breakfast tray.



Hsu Kai-Ting learned the values of nursing from patients. The happiest thing is to see them back to normal life and give back the society with positive energy.

Alive Is Good; Return with Love

From being hospitalized to discharge and until now, Old Mr. Mo looked like a totally different person. He said after our successful treatment, he had only one feeling - it is wonderful to be alive. “It was just like being reborn again,” he said, “We should listen to the doctors and nurses. Then we can find a way to work out the difficulty.” Before, he was selling noodles for a living. Not long after he was discharged from the hospital and went back to Puli and started a normal life. Old Mr. Mo, showing me his change of life, is like my teacher, also like a friend, mostly like a family member.



In 2017, Hsu Kai-Ting(right) spent her own leisure time to visit Old Mr. Mo(left) in Puli. Old Mr. Mo said the butterflies and bees on his hands are symbol of his “Rise from hardship.

Mo and Mr. Pong are planning to make a PSA (public service announcement) film to tell young people what kind of sufferings will happen during oral cancer treatment, telling them it is better not to smoke, drink or chew bethel nuts (areca nut palm.).

Our ward admits patients from the ENT department. There was a patient who said, “We are a group of people who do not have throats, tongues, cheeks, and chins.” It was heart wrenching to hear that. It is hard to look at the pain of the patients. I thank them for their willingness to tell me about their past. Through our expertise, we can alleviate their physical suffering, and furthermore being able to reconcile with themselves and families. The most important thing is to return them to the community, back to life and be able to give. To give back their love and resources back to the society. For me, my value is to help patients to return to their life, to create their own good energy. I hope that I can release kindness and use my professional skills to help people in suffering, as well as solace for the aching hearts.

What is the value of being a nurse? I realized it from Old Mr. Mo, Mr. Pong and other patients.

Old Mr. Mo made flying butterflies and bees out of straws and papers. It is a symbol of his rebirth from hardship. He said that years ago when his son died, he was touched by the religious chanting performed by Tzu Chi volunteers for his son funeral service. He couldn't imagine after those wasted years, he could become a useful person who could do something to give back the society.

After discharged, Mr. Pong said he doesn't scold his wife anymore. He is a traveling bus driver. He said, “Now, when I hold my steering wheel, my heart feels open and happy.” He often thought about how to help people while driving. Old Mr.