



PLEASE LISTEN TO ME, DEAR HEAD NURSE

In-Service Education Program for a Novice Nurse



Just a blink of an eye, I had already been a nurse for a whole year.

A Two-Year Nursing Program at Dalin

I remember when I was studying at a five-year nursing school, I was worrying whether I should continue my study at college or go to work. Coincidentally, at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital I found an in-service education program provided by Tzu Chi University of Science and Technology. Teachers from Hualien (in eastern Taiwan) will come to Dalin (southern Taiwan) to teach nurses who work at the hospital. At that moment I was amazed by this kill-two-birds-with-one-stone program which fully satisfied my need. Therefore, without any hesitation I signed a contract with Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital.

Knowing I will work at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital after graduation, during the five internship courses in nursing school, I chose them all at Dalin. During the internship I worked extra hard and tried to remember whatever I learned. So, even after I became a formal staff and assigned to a unit I had never worked at, I was already familiar with the environment.

Novice Wanted Further Education; Just Opened Mouth and Asked

Before checking in with the hospital, I contemplated how to tell my Head Nurse (HN) that I wanted continuing education. I have thought of many ways to deliver the message. I was afraid that my HN would think that I was arrogant and had no manners. After all, who would request to work and study at the same time on the first day of work. Anyway, this was the reason I chose this hospital to work at. This included my life planning and self-expectation.

When I met HN on the first day of the work, I felt she was not serious at all as a supervisor. She cheerfully introduced herself to us. However, in my mind what I really cared was if I could continue studying. So, after she finished introducing herself, she then asked us our expectation working at 10A ward. Although my mind was struggling, I was able to force myself to ask a tough question: "Can I study while working?"

Archiving Credits Step by Step; Receiving Full Support from the Unit

My HN Hu was first stunned for a moment. But she then immediately praised my thought of continuing education. She then said, "There are two nurses in our unit taking classes, it will be difficult to arrange the shifts if you also take classes. Plus, you are inexperienced now. Can you take care of the work and study at the same time?"

I answered, "I want to study part-time first, then full-time after I am more experienced in my work." She gave her consent right away. I was surprised but thrilled. She said,



“Your commitment to advance knowledge is great. If I can find a way for you, then, of course, you can do it. Your suggestion should not put too much stress on yourself; and you can also get yourself accommodated to the job better. However, if you encounter any difficulties or feel hard to adjust, you must let me know. Don’t make yourself too exhausted.”

I have been working for a year, and also going to school. I do classes on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Whenever HN Hu saw me, she would ask, “Was it too tiring and too stressful? Can you take it?” I replied jokingly, “Ask no more! I am fine. If there is anything you can do to help, I will ask.” Although I said to her that some issues were a bit annoying, in my heart I was actually warmed by her remarks. She made me feel even a novice can also have the privilege of pursuing further education.

HN Hu has given me such precious opportunity. For not letting her down, I worked hard to do my work well. I couldn’t let HN and the seniors feel I didn’t take my work seriously. Good thing was I got along very well with the seniors. HN Hu was supportive and often showed me her concerns and encouragement.

While working and studying at the same time, I spent most of my free time on taking classes. But one great thing was whenever I needed time for my family, vacations or rescheduled classes, HN Hu always tried to adjust the work schedules in order to meet everyone’s need. HN Hu is like our big sister who solves all sorts of problems for us. I am so lucky to have her to look after us and become part of this big family. I have never gone to work with a long face. Every day I brought my positive energy to the unit. I think attitude and thoughts are essential. My mom said, “I have never seen a new employee goes to work so joyfully.” It is true that the work is very demanding. There are many things to learn. But the chief nurse always attentively listens to every colleague. She is not only leading people but also their hearts. She tries to solve everyone’s problems. The senior nurses I work with were always collaborative with one another and helped solving my questions. Colleagues who started working at the same time with me were always cheerful with one another while sharing good and bad times together. So, I have no reason to be afraid of going to work. On the other hand, I enjoy the time and hard work with everyone.

The Heartwarming Moments Experienced at Work

On the third day of my work, an old male patient I learned to take care of passed away. I saw my senior nurse were busy around; and the family of the deceased contacted their relatives tearfully. HN Hu led me to change clothes for the deceased and removed all the tubes from his body. I am a person who cries easily. Plus, hearing HN Hu repeatedly called out to the deceased: “There is no more pain. You can go without worries...” and



Head Nurse, Hu Yu-Chuan teaching Chen Ju some skills.

saw my senior nurse comforting the family. My eyes started turning blurry. Then I cried loudly with the family. Although I told myself not to tear, but the tears couldn't help pouring down.

Afterwards, HN Hu reviewed with me all the procedures that need to be followed when taking care of terminal patients. I feel grateful that HN Hu always personally demonstrates the tasks as well as doing things with us. She made me feel that she is not only taking care of patients and their families physically but also mentally. These heartwarming moments are something I cannot learn at school or from books.

Ask When in Doubt; Learning the Skills with Courage

During clinical practices, there are always questions about the difficulties of nursing and associated techniques. But I am not afraid to ask. After all, what we look after are human lives. Therefore, I would ask if there are some problems that I couldn't find the causes. The senior nurses would explain to me patiently. Sometimes, when they are busy, I would ask HN Hu who is very knowledgeable. She could always make



Chen Ju thanks Head Nurse Hu for reminding her to be a nurse who can resolve problems.



me fully understand by explaining using the cause and effect in Buddhism terms. I remember after probationary period, I needed to work independently but I panic and felt helpless. HN Hu was there to remind me to prioritize tasks that could be done simultaneously, and not wasting time on trivial matters. She also guided me how to write a complete clinical report.

I remember there was a period of time I often failed inserting IV on patients. The unit was Rheumatology. The veins of patients are normally very hard to find and to insert. I didn't want to always bother other nurses for fear of interrupting their duties. Therefore, wearing a thick skin, I went to HN Hu's office for help.

"HN Hu, I couldn't insert the IV, I have injected..."

Before I finished my words, she asked, "Did you try your best?"

I nodded my head with embarrassment.

She then said, “It is okay, as long as you have tried your best. I will go to do it with you.”

She held my hands and walked to the patient, then explained to the patient, “Chen Ju, she is new to the job, but she tries very hard. I believe her skill will be very good later. I hope you can understand.”

After the explanation, the patient was forgiving. But some people couldn’t accept it. Sometimes, before I was able to find the veins, they had already called the other senior nurses to do it for them. HN Hu could always use her own ways to convince patients to give the novice a chance, which encourage me to advance my skills.

Appreciate HN’s Encouragement; Feel Joyful about Progress in Clinical Practice

Whenever HN Hu performed IV on patients, I would look at her with admiration. She said I was overreacting. She told me to practice more to get used to it. She taught me some techniques that I need to pay attention to. After many observations, I finally learned some tricks and gradually improved my skill. She often recognized my progress which enhanced my confidence to be better.

One time, a patient held my hand and told me, “I feel my sickness is reduced by a half whenever I saw your smiling face.” I love to be a nurse. Many patients often looked sad and down. But if we greet them with our warm-heartedness, even a serious person will open-up and return us with smiles. Being sick is actually very painful, getting stuck in the hospital and feeling bored. If they can feel warmth with our care, all the hard work is worthy.

There was a national hospital accreditation process in June. Every morning HN Hu would review the whole process to help us better remember all the main points. I was not nervous during the assessment being asked by judge members. Because what they asked were the things I did all the time. Also, with HN Hu’s assistance, I faced it with ease. After the accreditation, everyone got together and celebrated. It was wonderful to see this after all the hard work.

Reflecting my short nursing career, there were hard times filled with achievements and joyfulness. Until now, I have no regret of being a nurse. Instead, I feel lucky and grateful. There were remarks from HN Hu that were deeply imprinted in my mind: “Don’t just act like a tool, be a nurse who can discover problems, and be able to resolve them.”

I will always remind myself of my original resolve to be a nurse. I expect myself to advance and become an intelligent, independent and kind Angel.