

**From Head Nurse:**

# Accompanying Juniors to Be Prepared

**By Chiang Feng-Yin, Deputy Head Nurse, 9B Oncology Ward Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital**

I joined the Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital in 2009 when I graduated from nursing school. My days as a newcomer to the ward were full of anxiety, fears and even tears. Right after work, I would prepare notes from the internal medicine to surgical textbooks and carried them with me in case a senior staff asked me questions the next day. I was shy and introverted so I was afraid to ask the senior staff questions and did not know how to interact with them. I was scolded countless times due to my poor communication skills. Fortunately, there were colleagues to guide me along the way and helped me learn amongst the most stressful situations. Miraculously, the thought of quitting never crossed my mind even in the most challenging days.

## **Don't Want to Be the Pushover nor the Monster Mentor**

There were many organizational changes at the beginning of the hospital opening period. Soon I was supervising junior nurses and associate managers. Remembering what I went through as a newbie, I tended to be the “nice mentor” to the junior staff and cleaned up after them. Then I realized that this would only hurt their chance of growth and delay their independence. Therefore, I changed my method and decided that I would let them finish the tasks, so they could learn from their mistake while guiding them along the way.

I saw my younger self in many of the newcomers. Of course, when things were stressful, I sometimes lost control and blamed them for incompetency! Until one day, I realized that the junior staff was scared to interact with me for shift changes. I started to examine myself and realized somehow I turned into a monster in their eyes!



**Current unit Deputy Head Nurse Chiang Feng-Yin Chiang (right), is developing junior staff independence while cultivating self-growth.**

### **New Generation of Counseling; Be with Them Every Step of the Way**

My experiences informed me when people are afraid to interact with you for fear of being scolded, they would not open to you. Therefore, I had to adjust my perception and control my emotions. For the new generation, it was not enough just imitating the format I was taught. I have to be their classmate, their friend to know what they are thinking. I need to learn their language in order to get their honest feedback about their hurdles so I can address them accordingly. From my interaction with Pei-Yu, I saw a confused newcomer growing into a professional nurse who could handle the full palliative care all by

herself with motivation to discover issues and resolve them before they surface. Honestly, I felt a sense of accomplishment to be part of her journey!

When Chang Pei-Yu was a newbie, she was one of the junior nurses I almost asked her to quit considering nursing as a career. I remember the incident when a patient was suffering from indigestion, but Pei-Yu did not take that into consideration when she asked the family member to feed the patient with milk, which caused patient to vomit. I was very angry because I considered the ability to evaluate patient's digestive function be one of the basic practices of nursing. She also put the patient at risk because vomiting could also cause coughing and induce aspiration pneumonia. Although Pei-Yu responded that she only asked the family member to feed some milk but did not realize that the family member was also learning how to care for the patient and didn't think to check digestive function before continuing; or perhaps the family member misunderstood and thought they needed to feed her all of the milk... the more I heard, the more seriously my thoughts became. Nevertheless, I repeated the training once again to emphasize the important points.

### **Accompanying Growth; Activate All Potentials**

Since my promotion, I have been the Head Nurse of Oncology for two years now. Mentor Head Nurse Hsu Chi-Chen at the time left me an important concept – helping coworkers in individual development planning, nurturing talents, and promotes self-improvement habits. Therefore, when I grew professionally, I also wanted my coworkers, like the junior staff, such as Pei-Yu, to grow with me. Watching her mature, both professionally and personally, she had since gotten married and became a mother, she was very clear about her goal of becoming a palliative care nurse. Hence, I worked with her to develop a plan to obtain the required nursing credits.

Pei-Yu's self-motivation, hunger for knowledge and self-discipline inspired other nurses at the ward to become better. In order to demonstrate that nursing is not just about caring for patients and doing the monotonous work, I had to let everyone experience the journey themselves. It was through mentorship, promotions or career changes that people at the unit witnessed the outstanding developmental opportunity to help set direction and the standards. We continue to have nurses asking for outside opportunities for school credits or to be certified as oncology or palliative nurses. This not only ensures the highest quality of patient care, it also allows the unit staff to grow as a team. Often, I use my own experience to encourage them to always be prepared because you never know what life will bring you next.