



## Male Nurse Diary

# The Narration of a Thai Male Nursing Student in Hualien, Taiwan

**By Chonlatee Takhum,  
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Sa-wad-dee-krub (Hello,) I am Chonlatee Takhum from Thailand. I am a senior nursing student at Tzu Chi University. I spent my elementary and high school years in Ching Mai Tzu Chi schools. I came to Tzu Chi University after graduated from high school and received scholarship from Gold Jubilee Medical Center Mahidol University.

### **Growing up with Tzu Chi Volunteering Spirit**

I grew up in Tzu Chi for more than ten years. The most impressive Tzu Chi's humanitarian culture is "being a volunteer!" Speaking of volunteering, it may not be so special in Taiwan, however, in Thailand, Ching Mai Tzu Chi school is the only one that offered volunteering opportunities at this time. At the end of each month, the school led students to various places to distribute foods, clean the environment, help the poor building homes or hold activities at nursing centers for the elderly, etc.

By participating in the volunteering activities, I have seen many people suffering. There were many cases involving children my age who had an elementary education. Every day they work at farming, weeding, and harvesting fruits. There was an older woman who had to take care a bedridden paralyzed child. Through volunteering myself, I realized how lucky I am after visiting so many people suffering. I realized that we are living happily every day. Every



**Chonlatee Takhum thought, being a good nurse is something he feels worth doing and meaningful.**

day my father would take and pick up us to and from school, and my mother would cook delicious meals for us. We ate well every single meal. At the same time, there were many people hungry or had to work overtime at night. They just wanted to make some money to feed their families. I witnessed some patients whose physical and mental conditions were worse because of their living habits, culture and lack of education. At that time, I thought if I had some medical knowledge, I could help.

### **Acquiring Time Management and Planning Skills Instead of Joining the Military**

Although I like to volunteer, I planned to be a soldier when I was in middle school. I was attracted by the image of a person in military uniform. Therefore, I registered for the entrance examination for an army school - Taiwan Chung Cheng Armed Forces Preparatory School. During the third year of my middle school, I woke up at 5 o'clock every day to study and continued my physical training after school. I also helped my mother selling sausages at a night market and I had my books with me. The family was in need of help so I learned driving with my father. I would take my two little brothers to help my mom selling sausages on holidays and my books of course. On weekends, I attend tutoring school in Ching Mai. My friend and I spent time in Ching Mai because of the commuting distance, three hours of public transportation each way.



**Chonlatee Takhum spent his elementary and high school years at Ching Mai Tzu Chi schools. He studies nursing at Tzu Chi University, graduated from high school and received scholarship from the Golden Jubilee Medical Center Mahidol University.**



In the end, I failed the examination. Worst, I could not try again the following year because of age. I felt sad thinking the other classmates spent their holidays on the internet or video games while I stayed home studying for the exam.

When I was older, I found I was different than others my age. I realized that I was able to manage my time. I was able to walk out of my comfort zone, make decisions and plan for my future.

After graduating from high school, I obtained a scholarship to study in Taiwan. It was a precious opportunity to experience life in a different county, challenge my own capacity, and without burdening my parents for support. I would have job opportunities upon returning to Thailand. Therefore, it was the best decision I had made in my life.

### **Helps from Parents, Friends and Teachers During My First Overseas Study**

However, this journey of studying abroad was not so easy! At Ching Mai airport, there was another student with me on the day I was flying out of the country. She received scholarship from her school for studying Communications. At that time, I was excited as well as nervous and worried what would happen in the future. We met a senior Tzu Chi member who happened to be heading to Taiwan to attend floral lesson. After greeting and talking to him, we both felt relieved. With the company of the senior, we both were at ease and enjoyed the view of the sky on the airplane. When we arrived Taiwan, another Tzu Chi senior member picked us up and sent us to Taipei Train Station. We were two nervous foreign kids who felt relieved and touched as well.

During my first year, I was very nervous. The environment, language and culture

were stranger to me. When I had classes with other classmates, I dared not speak to them. When I introduced myself, the nervousness I had experienced was beyond imagination. My Chinese failed me and I did not know what to say. Not only because there were not many words in my head, but also because I was afraid would others understand me.



**Chonlatee Takhum (left) participated in the performance for Hudang Reward during the first year. It allowed him to practice Chinese and interact with other students.**





**Chonlatee Takhum loves traveling with his backpack. Studying in Taiwan was his first adventure.**

I had learned Chinese two months before the school started at Tzu Chi University Chinese Center; there was not much opportunity to put it into practice. At the center, everyone was a foreigner who spoke broken Chinese. However, we seemed to understand what the other side trying to say.

During most of the first year of school, I understood what the teachers said so I guessed at most part of it. Although I had learned the basic medical subjects in high school; chemistry, biology etc. where all the terminology was in Chinese, it was very tough for me during the class. Even I reviewed all the materials, I still found it difficult. Regardless of all the difficulties, I tried my best to learn while on scholarship so I worked hard.

Sometimes, when I was too tired to continue, I would find a quiet place to relieve my stress. The most efficient way to let go of my stress was calling home. At that time, my parents did not know how to use the Line App. I would call them by phone regardless of the cost. The first time when I heard the voice of my parents, I could not help crying. I was at the Daxi building, and talked to my parents. I did not expect I would cry like a baby. After hearing the encouraging remarks from my parents, I continued my journey.

Besides my parents, I also received an encouragement from my teachers and classmates. They encouraged me to try out different activities. In my first year, I participated In a Hudang Reward performance. I played the main role along with the other three students. This activity affected me in a great way. It was during the process of practice, I could at the same time practice my Chinese, as well having more chance to interact with classmates. We became closer and I did not feel so lonely anymore.



## **Stressful Clinical Practice; Being a Nurse with Empathy**

From sophomore to senior year, the challenge was clinical practice. During the practice, I faced stress from either the patients, teachers or assignments. The stress from the patients was from communication. When I opened my mouth and started talking, they knew I am a foreigner. Some patients were willing to give me a chance; some were totally rejecting and had no trust on me. However, the seniors at the clinical practice program would accompany me and interact with each case. When the patients saw there was a senior with me, they would feel at ease, and then gave a chance to practice.

Speaking of the stress from teachers and clinical practice assignments, although my Chinese has improved yet my writing needed more improvement. One can recall when in elementary school, you might speak very well but not write well. My level of Chinese writing is equivalent to elementary school. I remember when I did my clinical practice at the medicine and surgery departments, my assignment was full of red correcting marks from the teacher. The funniest thing was the teacher asked my teammates to help me to correct my assignments. Although my teachers were exhausted after reading my work, they all tried to teach me wholeheartedly. They encouraged me to work harder. I appreciated all the help from my teammates.





**Chonlatee Takhum ( right) wishes to return home upon graduation. He wants to appreciate nursing work more, work for the goodness of patients, and enjoy the work!**

I want to be a nurse who can truly understand the needs of patients. At school, the teachers always taught us to put our patients at the center, standing in their shoes. However, in reality, we might be unconsciously neglecting patients' feelings. Therefore, after changing the shift, before facing the patients, I would quietly think, "If I was this patient, what kind of care I would expect from the nurse? What kind of attitude I am expecting?" I believed taking a few minutes to think, I would get different feedback from the patients. In the long term, people might pay more respect to nurses. I believe spending few minutes to think before acting, we can change others' perspective about nurses. After I graduate and go back to Thailand, I work for the goodness of patients, do nothing to harm fs and make myself enjoy the work!

### **Daily Contemplation Before Sleep; Do Something Meaningful and Bring Joy**

Being a good nurse is something I feel worth doing and meaningful. A Nursing job can make me money that can afford me go travel vacations, touring around with my backpack. Not just taking traveling as the center of your life. This June I will graduate from Tzu Chi University and go back to Thailand. I am grateful for the guidance from my teachers, patients and their family, as well as, my classmates who grew with me. I wish that I classmates experienced the joy of their beautiful and meaningful nursing journey to different corners of the world. Thank you!