



# Walk out of Hospital to Help Cure the Needy

**Kuo Jui-Min,**

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**By Hsieh Ming-Fang**



“It’s a blessing that I can go to work when I get up every morning,” is not a surprise according to Kuo Jui-Min. What is keeping her going for twenty some years of nursing career even though nursing was not her first choice? What was her motivation and energy to stay in the nursing field?

### **Good Daughter and Appreciative with Companion**

In Dounan, Yunlin County, there was a family with two boys and two girls. Among them, there was a girl named Kuo Jui-Min who was very introversive. Because of her introversion, her uncle guessed she would be either a teacher or a nurse when she grew up.

When she was in Junior High school, she felt she didn’t study hard enough and didn’t do well in math. She wasn’t interested in business or vocational school, thus, nursing became her choice. “I didn’t do well for the entrance examination for high school. Thus I told my mom, I would go to a nursing school.” Prior to that, there were alumni who came to school to recruit and introduce Min-Hwei Nursing School (now Min-Hwei College of Health Care Management). Therefore, she thought it was good that she could learn nursing and have a job after graduation. So she was persuaded by the nursing career opportunity.

After admittance into Min-Hwei Nursing School, she and four classmates from Junior High packed and went to school. For three years, they lived in the dormitory, studied together, rented a house together, and finished school. Then a filial Jui-Min went straight to work at a small hospital in Douliu after spending a lot of her parents’ money for college.

After four years, she felt she needed to advance her academic knowledge; therefore, she went to Taichung and worked during the day and went to school after work to get a two-year college degree. Right after graduation, she chose to work in Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital in 2002 that wasn’t far from her house and just opened for two years. Then, in early 2003, SARS broke out in Taiwan and everyone had to protect himself or herself to be insulated from infection, especially those who worked in hospitals. She was also very careful to protect herself from infection and safely avoided the SARS storm.

The job as a nurse requires working three shifts. Sometimes, there is no time to drink water. In 2004, Orthopedics Department was recruiting a nurse practitioner (NP). Jui-Min wanted to give herself a chance, so she switched her career path and became an NP. At that same time, she registered for on-job study for a two-year university degree.



## **Journey to Disaster Relief and Free Clinics**

In 2007, Jui-Min got her university degree, and, she began her unusual yet critical year of self-development.

One day, her head nurse received information about Tzu Chi's winter relief activity and asked if she would like to participate. She felt it was an unusual opportunity and wanted to give it a try. As expected, her kind heart was touched. "We were at Guizhou, deep inside the mountains in Mainland China and exhausted after a long journey. The children there struggled with no money to go to school. With Tzu Chi's help, they now can go to school."

After seeing others in hardship, she realized how lucky and wealthy she was in Taiwan upon her return. She shared what she saw with her colleagues. In 2010, She grabbed the opportunity to attend Tzu Chi's first free clinic in Suzhou with her colleagues.

Since then, she also started to participate in Taiwan's free clinics held by Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA). "Most of the time I work in the hospital with patients come to seek help. To participate in free clinics, we can help those who can't leave their homes."





Because her hometown is in Yunlin County, she primarily participates in the events held by TIMA's Yunlin Branch and follow up patients' condition monthly. There was an elderly whose arms and legs were amputated due to necrosis was being cared for by his wife. Whenever he had to leave the house, his wife needed to lift him from wheelchair and ordered a car, it is very tiring for both of them. "So we visit them every month, we are like friends to show our caring for them and to encourage them. The patient can share his feelings with us. We chat like friends." For her, it is not like visiting patients, but to visit old friends.

### **Spot the Most Beautiful Smile on Earth**

From Da Ai television, we could see the free clinics being held globally and supported by TIMA from all over the world. TIMA's spirits of helping the world touched Jui-Min. She wanted to have the experience working with other countries' medical staff herself.

In November of 2013, super Typhoon Haiyan severely damaged the Philippines, her name appeared on the dispatch team list. When she arrived in the Philippines, she experienced life vicissitudes. No one knows if tomorrow or impermanence comes first.

"When typhoon comes, it destroys the entire home. Therefore, when I open my eyes every morning, I feel contentment. I can come to work is a blessing." She could not forget the experience of disaster relief. "Previously, we were able to stay in hotels,



no matter how rundown, when we went to disaster area; there were always beds available. However, in Philippines, we did not have any beds. We stayed in the classrooms with mosquitos nets and slept on the floor.”

“When I looked around, I reminded myself this: ‘ Not too far from here, there were people who had no place to stay, even the necessities like water or food. I had a place to stay is a blessing.’” After returning to Taiwan, her colleagues asked her how she could sleep in that harsh environment. Her answer astonished her colleagues “Not at all, we were so much luckier than those victims.”

Whenever there are free clinics locally, she would assist surgeons to clean the wounds. She would inject anesthetic to help patients ease the pain. She felt sad seeing patients enduring pain. She said, “Patients usually endure pain but still smile to thank us. The most beautiful smile is the smile from the patient.”

Another beautiful scene that she saw was the teamwork led by Dr. Robert Sy from the Philippines’ medical team to remove patients’ tumors.

### **Spending the International Nurse’s Day in Buddha Country, Nepal**

In April of 2015, Nepal had a big earthquake. Jui-Min joined the Tzu Chi’s third relief tier. On May 9, she accompanied doctors to visit a local resident’s tent to care for a 32-year-old who had Hydrocephalus but looked like a very young girl.

When she saw the young woman had many wounds, she felt so bad. “She must had been bedridden for many years and undergoing treatment from hospital for a while. There are seven big wounds on her head, hand, hips, and buttocks. We can see five areas were eroded exposing the bones. Some tissues were dead. Dr. Yeh Tian-Hao cleansed and treated the wounds while we assisted. It took nearly an hour to complete the tasks while the flies were roaming nearby.”

During the dressing change, rainwater sipped into the tent so everyone helped to raise the girl’s bed. Every time, when she changed dressing, Jui-Min felt sad just like that heavy rain. “Her condition is so bad that she should have operations for new skins. I felt that she didn’t have appetite and she is so skinny.”

On May 12, Kuo Jui-Min and Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital RN Chueh Na-Yao visited a grandma and her family. It was already noon. She was about to eat banana and apple that she brought back from the hotel, and to prepare materials for the afternoon’s visit. After that, she was going to help the change dressing for patients at the clinic. Suddenly, she heard roaming noises from the ground and the birds were flying everywhere, then an earthquake happened.

The earthquake was big. Jui-Min was so scared she dropped down to hide. Then a resident came and said a house had fallen and there might be more victims



coming to the free clinic. Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital Vice Superintendent Lai Jun-Liang and Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital's Deputy Head Nurse Tu Ping-Hsu immediately started preparing the system to accommodate the flooding victims.

Jui-Min and colleagues immediately packed the equipment and medical supplies and rushed to scenes that needed help.

It was her first trip to Nepal and she experienced a big earthquake while halfway through her stay. This experience deeply affected Jui-Min's heart.

### **Doctors Save Life, Attributable Half Credit to Nurses**

From being a nurse to becoming an experienced nurse practitioner, Jui-Min felt her experience made her grow-up. "I am now not only taking care of patients, but I now care more about other factors affecting patients." For example, she sometimes visit patients' home to check-on the living environment, figuring out other factors affecting health.

Every month Orthopedics Dept. NP take turns to accompany primary doctors to take care of patients. However, Dr. Chien Rui-Teng's patients seemed to follow Jui-Min. For example, Wang Kuo-Chen from Penghu was under her care for two months already.

"The main caregiver is Jui-Min who always reminded me the needs of patients," said Dr. Chien who described himself as not a detail-oriented person. He is happy to cure patients, realizing that the nurses pay more details and attention to the needs of the patients. The contact between nurses and patients as well as the family are much deeper so they could see the stories behind the patients.

Chien saw Jui-Min a warm-hearted caring person attentive to details. "Our cooperation is like fishes needing water and water needing fishes. I often have many activities to attend. When I cannot find anyone to go, she would never decline my invitation."

Jui-Min sincerely devoted herself to free clinics, rescue missions, and disaster relief. "She is in Orthopedics for many years, not only is she enthusiastic with humanity activities, she also helps the relief effort without hesitation. All of these are because of her kind heart." Chien observed her as a practitioner, not only is she a follower and now an activist. She motivates others to participate in these activities and to become Tzu Chi Commissioners. "She participated at almost all the international reliefs. I went with her many times with other Taiwan's medical association to free clinics like Suzhou, relief mission in Nepal...."

"Medical staff shouldn't always stay in the air-conditioned room waiting for patients to come, what we can see in this situation will be limited," said Chien. He



emphasized to walk out of the examination room, and leave the air-conditioned room to go in the real world. Visit disaster areas and patients' home will show the real concern for patient-centered medicine.

### **Asking for Nothing, But Receiving More in Return**

"Tzu Chi provided us many good opportunities to help the world, especially those medical personnel who always are at the front line for rescue mission; they show concerns for patients accompanied by the Tzu Chi volunteers. To a certain degree, one can't differentiate between a medical or charity issue." Chien felt that medicine and charity are side by side. Medical personnel not only have special knowledge on medicine and also have the kind heart. Mercy plus wisdom is a double blessing just like Jui-Min devotion without asking for anything in return.

"I really appreciate this blessing!" That is what Jui-Min felt after she came back from Nepal earthquake relief.

These days, she keeps telling herself, "Always look at my own life and appreciate what I have and remind myself if I have helped others." The next winter relief, she would like to be in Yunan because it is much harsher environment than Guizhou in China.

"Welcome to the relief mission!" is Jui-Min self-discipline and everyone's expectation. Kuo Jui-Min wants to use every opportunity to help others.