

One Last Wish to Attend His Daughter's Wedding

Early morning, inside the Heart Lotus Ward, family members and nursing staff were busy preparing for Mr. Ma's temporary leave from the ward so he could attend his youngest daughter's wedding engagement ceremony. His oldest daughter and I helped him dressed. The most important step was to hide his urinal bag so no one could tell he is a patient. We needed to switch to a smaller portable bag from the regular size so it can hide inside his clothing. Next, the in-charge nurse briefed me and reminded me to watch his condition. We also discussed his medication with his physicians. We were now ready to accompany his journey home.

Mr. Ma is a patient under palliative care. I have been taking care of him for about a year. Ma is independent in his daily routine. He was admitted into Hematology for pain management. As soon as the pain was under control, Ma was anxious to go home because he missed farming, raising chickens and growing vegetables. His oldest daughter said her dad wanted to manage his health through organic diet. Ma nodded and said, "It's better

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to eat the vegetables you grow yourself.” The nursing staff heard his wish and did their best to control his pain so that he could be discharged as early as possible.

Unfortunately, a week after his discharge, Mr. Ma's pain returned and he also showed signs of edema with weight loss. When he was hospitalized again, his primary care physician admitted him to the Palliative Heart Lotus Ward for hospice care and treatment.

Once arrived at the Heart Lotus Ward, Ma asked, “Can I take the targeted therapy? I can pay out of pocket if needed.” It turned out that he wanted to be able to attend his youngest daughter's wedding. Because of his deteriorating



Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital Heart Lotus Palliative Care team accompanies Mr. Ma's journey home by changing into Indigenous (Buno Tribe) gown to attend his daughter's engagement ceremony.

health, his family obliged to the medical care team's recommendation to move up the wedding engagement schedule.

After some consideration, the oldest daughter decided to have the engagement party at home and the wedding ceremony a week after at a nearby church. The most worrisome task was Ma unpredictable pain condition. When Ma heard of all the trouble his family and the medical care team had to accommodate for the ceremony, he said with reservation, "It's okay if I don't participate. Let's see later." We all knew how bad he wanted to attend his youngest daughter's ceremony. His oldest daughter even had his traditional indigenous Buno tribal outfit tailor-made so he could wear it at the party.

To make his wish come true, our palliative medical team decided to accompany him home.

Once home, Ma was so excited to see his grandchildren. He gave them big hugs and placed them on his lap. At this moment, we saw a content and peaceful smile lit up on his face. Everyone in the tribe used their native language to pray for Ma's health and gave him blessings. After the engagement ceremony, Ma wanted to spend the night at his home and sleep on his own bed to feel free and at ease again. We taught his daughters how to care for their father at home and how to administer injections. With our presence, the family was more comfortable and confident in their care for him to fulfill his wish.

On the journey of palliative care, we often accompany patients during the last mile. We try our best to ensure patients can have their dreams come true so they can leave the world without regrets. Of course, through hospice care, we also grow to appreciate life from a broader perspective.



Lin Hsiao-Chun said that working as a palliative nurse gives her a broader perspective towards life.