



Superman-Like Good Helpers in ER

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“Dr. Li, patient on the sixth bed, should I handle it first?”

“Dr. Li, the tenth bed’s family cannot be reached, I have notified a social worker.”

In a busy ER, it is always full of patients waiting for treatments with their anxious family members. In this noisy work environment, it is difficult to fully grasp the conditions and follow-up treatment plans with all patients; other than the attending physicians, the ER nurses are indeed the superwomen. Slightly different than nurses in other units, ER nurses have to deal with many new patients and their families in a single shift. Doctors and patients relationships are not easy to establish in a short period of time. When patients’ conditions change from time to time, good communication and the efficient executions are my high highest compliments to the ER nurses.

When I was a young resident first entering the emergency room, I remembered I always had to rely on the reminders from senior nurses for



patients treatments in order to handle all patients successfully. Especially, when many patients came at the same time, the ER nurses and I were always able to cooperate perfectly with each other to stabilize patients with urgent needs.

“Who’s in charge of this patient? Come! Let’s give intubation to those having urgent needs!”

“Intern student boy! Don’t stop the chest press; I’ll come and help you in a moment!”

“That low blood pressure patient need stabilizer, I’ll be right there after I finished the intubation for this emergency!”

“Dr. Li, there is another bed of hypoglycemia patient! I’ll draw blood first, and then make up blood sugar right away, I’ll remind you to see the patient when the patient wakes up.”



Although the ER nurses are responsible for executing the doctor's medical instructions, but their roles are not that obvious. Instead, they are like partners. Many senior nurses will also joke with the ER doctors in their free time. They give family members' feedback to the attending physician for discussion. Some extraordinary nurses even understand the patient's potential subsequent treatments, and cooperate with the attending physician with all the preparations, so the treatments can proceed smoothly without interruptions. The ER nurses are on 8-hours shifts. They easily handle a dozen or even twenty or thirty patients. Every patient is a new face. Each condition requires time to understand, the emotions of patient's family members, the considerations of the family financial factors, and so on. They all need to be dealt with comprehensively. So it is not exaggeration to say that ER nurses have superman's three heads and six arms. However, because of the fast pace in emergency room, the relationships between doctors and patients are weak. It is usually the place in hospital where medical violence most likely to occur. ER nurses are often first-line victims. Fortunately, with the government's effort in recent years, the situation has improved significantly. And it has also provided a safer working environment for our nursing colleagues.

It is not easy for the ER nurses to stay on the job long. The most common quitters are the new hires who typically transferred or resigned in less than six months because of job related stress. It may also be personal for many cannot continue yearlong shift rotations due to family reasons. Sometimes it also happened because of ER doctors shouted at them unknowingly. So it is rare to stay on for over 5 years. However, those who stay behind are usually tightly bonded. They all are big bodhisattvas with loving and big hearts. Also because of the busy work schedules, ER medical colleagues often neglect their meals. Sugar drinks often become ER nurses' favorites. Although it is not healthy, it can quickly achieve the healing emotions purpose. It is also one of popular items in ER doctors' treats. Every New Year party or spring department dinners are also organized for the nurses. There are no unnecessary performances, but lottery is usually arranged to give everyone a blessing for the New Year. This is also the time that ER doctors express their gratitude to the nurses and ER nursing colleagues.

The ER managers' responsibilities are, not only to cultivate the professional skills of ER nurses, but also to participate and assist individual colleagues in their life planning. Many specialty nurses in my department were in-house transferred from ER nurses. These specialty nurses with the on-job training usually have no problem adjusting. They



Dr. Li Kuan-I thanks the nurses and nurse practitioners in the emergency room of Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital for their dedication to their jobs.

can assist the head nurse working on clinical education. Emergency department often have opportunities to cooperate with the health department or the fire department for a large number of injuries, or help organizing ACLS or BLS training courses, which are also some ways to convert mood in the workplace. Some nursing colleagues even developed high interests in these non-clinical business and take them as lifetime careers.

The ER nurses are very important members in the emergency medical team. Although their practice is not easy to develop and the working environment is tough, but once it becomes mature, their expertise is as good as the doctors! I'm proud of the ER nurses!