

Hope Is Behind the Dark Cloud

As an Infection Control Nurse during the
Outbreak of Covid-19 Pandemic

By Tsai Shu-Jiuan, RN, team leader of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital Infection Control Unit

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It is truly a great challenge to face the covid-19 pandemic. I believe it is not only a great impact and challenge for our Infection Control Unit, but also the whole world and societies. In order to control this pandemic, the Ministry of Health and Welfare holds video conference every day to work on the countermeasures for this issue. This started before the Chinese New Year until now. How about us?

The development of the outbreak was gradually emerging from the beginning of January 2020. When the media and society were not aware of the crisis, awareness was rising among people in Infection Control units. Infection control training at our emergency care unit has started deploying as early as early January. Before the Chinese New Year, training was introduced to the whole hospital. Many physicians and colleagues attended the training class where



Chiayi County Magistrate Weng Chang-Liang thanks all the medical personnel for their work against COVID 19 during the International Nurses Day. Nurse Tsai Shu-Juan is on the right.

attendance was similar, if not higher, than a year-end party. We could see how important our colleagues think about this training. When the situation was getting more serious, training frequency increased. I was relieved after hearing people who attended the training said they had more understandings as a result. However, the scientific data of the Covid-19 virus kept evolving whenever the Ministry of Health and Welfare updated their guidelines. The countermeasures of the disease from the Infection Control Unit were adjusted accordingly. Our spirits were like a roller coaster, going up and down.

The outbreak started before the Chinese New Year when our hospital received the first suspected case. Our infection control nurses continually reminded every unit about the countermeasures of the disease. After all, this



was the first case; everyone dared not take it lightly. They worked until 2 a.m. and still came back to work the next morning to deal with related matters. During the Chinese New Year holidays, we dared not relax. Normally, there was only one infection control nurse on duty, then increased to two in case of unexpected events so they could help each other. We all gave up our vacations because we could not enjoy them with ease. This year, my husband took our children to Tainan to celebrate the Chinese New Year. I stayed in Dalin alone. It was the first New Year that I felt lonely and down. I could not sleep well at night because I was afraid that I would not hear the phone ring.

During this period, our infection control nurses were exhausted. Not only did they need to face patients and patient's family members, but also deal with problems among colleagues. Due to an increasing workload and stress, colleagues became emotional that could easily cause conflicts. Every day they needed to take care of the emotion and complaints from their colleagues, as well as meeting the requirements of most current policies. It is tough being an infection control nurse. There were times when people felt tired when



Officials from the Health Department in Chiayi County visited Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital to check the infection control related preparation.

facing setbacks and feeling even more exhausted when misunderstood by unforgiving colleagues and supervisors. Fortunately, everything will be in the past. Colleagues should understand and appreciate each other. Any problem should be communicated and explained. It is because everyone cares about the hospital, and working towards a common goal. We should outlast this outbreak and believe "Hope is behind the dark cloud." We can do it! After the outbreak, everyone can have a long vacation to relieve stress.

This pandemic made everyone more attentive to infection control. The SARS outbreak was long time ago so most of my colleagues have not experienced it. Even some who had experienced it have forgotten about it. This incident brought back the memories, and I hope everyone understands the responsibility of infection control: it isn't just for the physicians and nurses but everybody.