



Helping Remote Learning

By Tsao Ying, Professor, Nursing Department, Tzu Chi University

Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, our traditional “Crowning” ceremony in May for the sophomore of the 107th Nursing Class was cancelled. This Crowning ceremony signifies that our students finished two years of basic class works and ready to enter the clinical practice of nursing training. The students are crowned while accepting blessing and sincere instructions from the professors. After the crowning ceremony, the sophomores would then serve teas to the teachers to signify their appreciation. I remember it was last year (2019), during the May ceremony that I met Hiu-Wing’s parents for the first time. They put away their busy work in Hong Kong and specially came to Taiwan for their only daughter’s special occasion. During our conversation, I realized that they wanted their daughter to build a nursing career, so that she can serve the needed patients either in Taiwan or in Hong Kong.

I told Hiu-Wing’s parents that Hiu-Wing is a typical good student. She steadily moved up in her class work and accomplished all the requirements.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, everything in this world is side tracked. Taiwan found its first confirmed case on January 21st. On February 11, 2020 the Central Epidemic Command Center declared to temporarily close entrance of students from Hong Kong and Macao. Also, opening date for all schools was delayed. Therefore, Hiu-Wing was not able to return to Taiwan for scheduled school opening on February 25th, and her entire study plan and internship had to be rearranged.

A week before the school started, on February 17, all departments started to collect information of students from China, Hong Kong and Macao. The administration office compiled a list of students’ status in order to develop a flexible plan for their education. In Hiu-Wing’s case, the arrangement was a combination of remote learning, synchronized and non-synchronized instructions for her nursing program. Before the actual study



Nursing students took a group photo with their instructor, Professor Tsao Ying. At the back left is student Tso Hiu-Wing from Hong Kong. Photo taken before the lock-in policy.

program started, a training session was arranged for the students to get familiar with the “classes”. Teaching assistants were also trained to handle the communication tools, such as WeChat, Zoom, and Google Meet. Special phone lines were also installed for the convenience of the remote learning students.

My experience with the third year nursing program is that the “Children’s Nursing Study” starts on the fourth week of the semester (this year it starts on March 16). For the class, the students will have their cell phones ready prior to the class. The school’s ICAN teaching system (<http://ican.tcu.edu.tw/>) will announce the class time beforehand. The interactive tool Zuvio is used for roll call before class. A little quiz is conducted right at the end of the class. During the class, I give my lecture as usual. The only difference is the addition of the cell phone for video and audio recording. Ten minutes before the conclusion of the session, someone in the class sent a message to Hiu-Wing to stop recording and turn on Zuvio for the quiz. Such an arrangement made my remote teaching easy and smooth. In addition, this setup helps students to operate as a team which in turn builds up the core of the nursing education. We are proud to be Hiu-Wing’s teacher and classmates.

In our nursing department, laboratory tests and experimental works are usually arranged during the last two weeks of every semester. For the third year students, there are “Perinatal Period Care Experiment” and “Pediatric



Professor Tsao Ying (left) and Jiang Jiin-Ling (right) discussed with student Tso Hiu-Wing about her distance learning before the unblocking of Taiwan.

Nursing Experiments” before they enter the pediatrics internship. These are all in-person hands-on experiments. Even though they are elective courses, most nursing majors would not miss them. During the registration period, Hiu-Wing expressed her worries to be on campus because of the pandemic. I tried to tell her that these courses are not absolutely required for her graduation. Also, she could contact the instructors to obtain the class material to gain knowledge of the contents. By the middle of April, the return of students and the traditional “Qingming tomb sweeping” cause a minor surge in new cases. I was concerned that Hiu-Wing would not be able to return to Taiwan for her six weeks internship, beginning in May. I tried to call her on April 14, and she was busy with an online class. Even though I was not able to talk to her, I knew that she was working hard in Hong Kong for her school work.

I mentioned to Hiu-Wing about the situation in Taiwan, and expressed to her about my concern. I told her that her class work may have to be interrupted and her internship cancelled. In fact, no one could tell when Taiwan would open again and air transportation resume. At the Nursing

Department's Staff meeting, a flexible internship plan was proposed and passed. This plan was designed specifically for the waiver of the sequential requirements of the internship sequences. For example, internal medicine internship was the prerequisite of comprehensive internship I, and which in turn was the prerequisite of comprehensive internship II.

By May 11, the juniors were all in the hospital and ready for clinical internship. But Hiu-Wing was still in Hong Kong. The only thing that we could do was try our best to coordinate adjustments of the procedure.

The world is unpredictable, however, there is the old saying that: health is one's fortune and safety is one's happiness. In our department, the freshmen and sophomores usually have studied the fundamental medical sciences. At the end of their sophomore year, a 10 day in-hospital basic nursing training session is arranged. From the first semester in junior till senior, emphasis is on specialized nursing and clinical practice. The clinical internship is a major test of our nursing training. Students must be mentally prepared. It is even so in this pandemic year, because our students will be in the hospital under an unprecedented condition.

Because of the seriousness at this stage of their studies, I follow the tradition of the department. That is to offer books to our students. The variety of books includes: "Live Out of Meaning: From Concentration Camp to Existentialism", "Angel Walks Through the World: A Memoir of Life and Death", "No More Kidding, Mr. Feynman: Story of A Science Kid". Hopefully, with this type of readings, my students can realize the hardship in our world. In these readings, students may pick up the thoughts such as: the idea of "Sense Awareness and Revisit" of Professor Frank (professor of psychology and psychoanalysis); or ways to handle grief and loss in psychological adjustment and growth as suggested by Doctor Keebler Ross; or the humorous and yet logical approach of Mr. Feynman. With the teaching of these extracurricular materials, I hope my students not only can serve the physical health but also provide mental support for the patients.

Finally, I hope Hiu-Wing take good care of her, just like what she told me: study, read, exercise, and entertain to keep her physical and mental balance. Hopefully, the pandemic will end soon, and I will see the real Hiu-Wing again!