



I Miss the Days with Medical Volunteers in the Hospital

By Yang Chuan-Yu, Deputy Head Nurse of Ward of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital

“Head nurse, Volunteer Parents Lunch Party is almost here. Is there anything in particular your staff would like to eat?” “Volunteer Mom, we eat just about anything, nothing special, just enough to feel full. There are a few colleagues on a diet, so please don’t prepare too much...” When the Volunteer Lunch party date got closer, I would see chats on social media about the prep work. Whenever they asked for my input, I repeatedly reminded them not to prepare too much, just enough for everyone. However, by eleven am on the Volunteer Lunch party day, I saw volunteers hauling in two cars with three-tier rolling carts filled with vegetarian dishes. “That’s way too much!” They would kindly pat me on the back and said “No worries, it’s only once a month. You work hard all the time so you need food and nutrients to keep you going.” They always worry that we don’t have enough food and shower us with their love in this monthly lunch party. It’s a refreshing break when we take turns to enjoy the delicious food and even share them with the next shift ward’s coworkers. It makes the busy clinical work more bearable.

Besides taking care of the nursing staff, these volunteers are also good caregivers. “Sigh, my doctors said that the chemo didn’t work as expected. I have already worked so hard for so long...” With an empty look in his eyes, Brother Chan described the bad news that his physician told him about the Chemo result. He was feeling down. Although his relatives had not been around, he had always been positive and interacted with his roommate and the medical staff. Now he suddenly closed off communication with others and became depressed. His medical team felt that someone should keep



Volunteers push the special designed “Happy Train” to visit patients in the Cancer Ward.

him company. However, their clinical duties kept them busy so they asked the Cancer Patient Care Volunteers. “Brother volunteer, can you do me a favor? I have a patient who needs you right now.” Without hesitation, the Cancer Patient Care Volunteers responded: “Of course! Which patient? I will be right there!”

The medical volunteer visited Brother Chan after debriefed about Brother Chan’s medical history and hospital location. After an hour, when the nursing staff visited Brother Chan, they saw an upbeat patient chatting happily with the medical volunteer. “Hey, Brother Chan, what are the cheerful things that you guys talk about?” Brother Chan replied, “This is men’s talk, don’t you understand, Ha ha!” Although the detail of the conversation was never revealed, it was comforting to the nursing staff to know that somehow, the medical volunteer magically wiped away Brother Chan’s blues and brought a smile to his face!

A month later, Brother Chan returned to the ward to receive another round of Chemotherapy. “Hi nurses! I am here again for treatment! How come I haven’t seen my dear old volunteer friend?” Brother Chan was mumbling by himself while scanning every corner of the ward for his medical volunteer friend. After noticing this, the nurse said, “Come here, Brother Chan, now is the period under ward room limit regulation. Our medical volunteers are no longer able to visit us due to the COVID-19 restrictions.” “Aww, then no one would keep me company while I am getting my chemo treatment...” Then it hit the nurses. Yes, due to the strict control during the pandemic, the extensive medical volunteering operation was forced to suspend temporarily. Every medical staff at the Dalin Tzu Chi hospital had gotten used to having the medical volunteers around, it was quite an adjustment when they had to be turned away for safety precautions during the pandemics!



Deputy Head Nurse Yang Chuan-Yu(second from left) thanks their ward Tzu Chi volunteer parents.

One afternoon when the day shift nurse wondered about the well-being of a patient, who was transferred to the hospice care ward, they realized medical volunteers also served as messengers for updates of former patients. After some consideration, they decided they could cheer their former 10B ward patient by visiting him after their shift. In the eyes of me as a head nurse, it is the result of medical volunteers' passion and dedication that have successfully cultivated an atmosphere of great love. Every medical staff is inspired by Tzu Chi medical volunteer parents to provide loving care to patients and families.

Everyone who works at the Oncology ward deserves people's respect. Besides the daily responsibility of administering high-risk chemo therapies, we also need to care for the mental health of their patients. Also, every cancer patient battling with cancer treatment is critical to have compassionate care. Fortunately, we have a group of selfless medical volunteers who silently provided the much-needed warmth and love in this seemingly standard and routine medical environment.

The work at the Cancer Ward is fast-moving. Our interactions are usually brief and transitional before returning to our care routine. There are times when a simple misunderstanding could cause friction between medical staff, patients or patient families. Thanks to the empathetic medical volunteers who helped interpret our needs and accompany our growth during this process. Their selfless love to the 10B Cancer Ward provided us affection and care. Lastly, I would like to say to all the dedicated 10B volunteers, "Thank you! We are so grateful to have you."