

# Nursing Care with Sympathy

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During my junior year as a nursing student at Tzu Chi University of Science & Technology(TCUST), I was fortunate to have the opportunity to be an exchange student to study in Thailand. Highlight of my study involved visits to Tzu Chi care recipients. Accompanied by the elder Tzu Chi volunteers, we traveled for three hours through winding roads to visit a handicapped lady. She lived alone in a space of about 36 square feet. Her bedside piled with all her life supplies. Outside her living quarter was trash among fruit flies. She was born with atrophy feet. She could only crawl around in her living quarter. Therefore, we found many scratch marks all over her limbs and her body. Tzu Chi volunteers helped her with her chores and designed several tools to simplify her life. Volunteers also came to help her clean up the place and bath her. Little by little we brought sunshine to her world and inject hope into her life. These experiences taught me the true Tzu Chi humanistic culture.

In order to serve the poor, or the sick person, we not only do the hard and dirty work, but we also appreciate the opportunity to help.

## **Share My Own Story with the Patient**

After I graduated from the TCUST, I was assigned to the surgery department in Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital. In this section of the hospital, most of our patients would stay for just a few days. However, there are special cases. Some





of the patients would be in and out of the hospital with post-surgery complications. Several of this type of patients developed mental issues.

Once I confronted a patient suffering severe pains from his liver cancer. One day he was agitated by his pain and complained the lack of attention to his suffering. I sat by his bed and started to calm him down with soft talk. Then, I told him the story of my own. I told him a true story of my past. Slowly, as I revealed my health history, he turned reasonable and calm.

Even though I am just a young nurse, I have a story of my own. And the story is the main reason that I chose nursing as my lifelong career.

I was born with hemangioma on my lip. My parents took me to every famous hospital in Taiwan for treatment. I went through many operations, I stayed in many hospital beds and suffered unbearable pains. But I did not complain, because I was under the warmth and tender care of many medical professionals. I live a normal life now, to relieve the suffering of patients is the motive for me to enter my nursing career.

### **The Challenge of the Pandemic – Be Calm**

Just about half-year into my nursing career, COVID-19 exploded. The ward I served was instantly turned into an anti-pandemic unit. None of our staff had the required experience to fight the pandemic and the challenge was huge. Every day, when we put on the isolation gown, we felt like we were isolated from the real world. We worked under limited visibility, hearing, sense of touch, and insufficient oxygen. We were insulated with the gowns for hours, our dresses were wet from perspiration. Our patients' conditions were even more critical. Emergency arose at any moment. Fatigue among our medical staff under such high-pressure working environment became a serious problem.

On top of the common symptoms of COVID-19 that we handled day in and day out, there were patients who needed special attention. A 100-year-old lady in our special unit insisted to get up from her bed and go to the bathroom by herself. Patients falling in the hospital is a critical safety issue. It is specially so for the seniors. This old lady was in the hospital alone. But she would not take our advice. No matter what we told her not to go to the bathroom by herself, she would still sneak out of her bed quietly. That frustrated the nursing staff.

Finally, I asked the lady what made her to insist on doing it. With tears from her eyes, she said she just didn't want to burden us because we were working so hard. This episode made me think that while we were working so hard our patients also



sensed our burden and shared our pressure. I think sometimes we need to slow down and listen to our patients.

### **The Panic of Death, the Appreciation to the Patients**

Serving in the anti-pandemic unit made me feel that death is so nearby to each one of us. It is hard to imagine that after diagnosed with COVID-19, complication could attack instantly, and death could be just a matter of seconds. When we began our journey in the special unit, none of us had sufficient experience to face the challenge. It was a nightmare! In confronting with emergency, I was not able to sort out the priorities, and needed to rely on senior staff for guidance. Every day, I was hoping that the scenario would not replay.

Fortunately, the pandemic finally eases and the critical stage is over. In this difficult period, I have accumulated clinical skills and experience. Thanks for the help of many senior staff, I finally become an independent nurse.

I still remember that in the very first anatomy class, my teacher exhorted us by saying, “You should thank each and every cadaver teacher and in the future days each and every patient. Because they use their lives to teach you.” These words are deep in my mind. Thanks for every Tzu Chi activity I participated. Thanks to every person I have met, especially all the patients I have cared for. You are all my teachers.