



Thank You, Palliative Care Lotus Ward Volunteers

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After graduating from the Hualien Tzu Chi University of Science and Technology, I came to work in the Heart Lotus Palliative Care Ward of Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital. Many people asked me why I chose to devote myself to the field of hospice right after graduation. They felt this may be too heavy for young people in their early twenties. However I felt that “life and death are destiny, wealth and honor are fate”. Everyone is full of expectation and joy for the arrival of a new life. However, when their loved ones are about to pass away, some may not know how to deal with it. I hope to provide dignity and quality of life through the concept of hospice care. I wanted to bring more in-depth and substantial companionship to patients or family members who are facing life and death issues. This is the warmth and care I craved.

“There are pan fried dumplings here, and the red bean and purple rice porridge cooked by my mother. Eat it while it’s hot! After you’re full, you can continue to work.”

“Are you getting accustomed to the working environment? Being alone in a foreign location isn’t easy. You can talk to us about anything in your mind!”

These are the familiar kind voices in the Xinlian ward, and it is also very caring and warm companionship after leaving my hometown to work in Taichung. Hospice care volunteers are especially heartwarming. During my school days, I was accompanied by volunteering parents (Yide family). What was even more surprising is that there are still volunteers who care for me. I feel like I have a big family in Heart Lotus Palliative Care Ward. There are many volunteers who are like family members accompanying us. To differentiate from all hospital volunteers, this group of volunteers in our ward is called “Cancer-caring volunteers”.

I remember the first time I faced a patient who was about to die, and the family members were sad. I was young and inexperienced; therefore, I was anxious and helpless. When the Cancer-caring volunteers saw my bewilderment, they patted me on the shoulder and said, “It’s okay. Leave it to me.”

Later, the patient’s family members followed my lead and moved the patient to the congregation room, Cancer-caring volunteers asked all the family members to surround



the patient and led them to chant “Repentance” and “Four Great Vows”. Concentrating on it, the original sad expressions and frowning brows gradually relaxed, and the patient’s rapid breathing sound became smoother and smoother. Later, the patient passed away peacefully while we were chanting the Buddha’s name in unison.

“Dad is smiling; he is free from illness. Thank you, Dad! We will always love you”, said the patient’s children who were relieved.

I then guided all the family members to take turns to hold hands with the patient, hugging, and guiding the patient to say thank you, express love, apologize, and goodbye. Finally, we bowed to the patient for the opportunity to care for him and as a life mentor. Through this first experience, I learned that at the moment a patient is about to die, we must first reassure the family members so that the dying patient can feel at ease.

“I really want to eat a bowl of hot shacha noodles,” said Brother Liao, a homeless man who fell ill and was sent to our ward by the side of the road. When the volunteers



learned about it, they immediately conjured up a bowl of shacha noodles like a magician and brought it to Brother Liao.

“Thank you so much! I was incarcerated when I was young. So my family left me.” Volunteers responded, “All of us here are your family members! So you are not alone!”

Because of the thoughtfulness and meticulous care of these volunteers, patients can feel at ease. Brother Liao finished eating the noodles. Then not long after, the beautiful and relaxing melody “Happy Sail” filled the ward, and another volunteer played the ocarina. Brother Liao could not help but shed tears, and then talked about the bits and pieces of his life...

“What’s wrong with mom? Why is she always asleep and not talking to me?”

Ten-year-old Yoyo kept crying loudly. Hospice volunteers chose a picture book “I Love You Forever” to read to Yoyo, who said, “My mother used to tell me that she loves me every day.” One volunteer asked him. “Did you say ‘I love you’ to your mother?” Yoyo responded, “Yes! I always love my mother!”

After accompanying by the volunteers, Yoyo gradually understood her mother





would eventually leave him soon. The oncology volunteers took Yoyo to read “Where is the Wind Going?” They said, “Death is actually very natural, just like the wind, and exists in different ways.” Later, the volunteers went to Yoyo’s home to burn incense for his mother. Then Yoyo took the initiative to share, “Grandma Tzu Chi, I think death is a very natural thing!” This words came from the mouth of a ten-year-old child was really surprising. It turned out that both adult and child needed the correct concept of life education. Through demonstrations by volunteers, I learned that picture books, paintings, cards and other media can be used for education.

Clinical nursing work is sometimes very demanding, especially in the hospice ward. Here you see more life and death scenarios. The circumstance of each family is different. In addition to the physical care of patients, there are more psychological and spiritual aspects to understand, sympathize and accompany. Hospice volunteers are like magicians shuttling in between: the smell of coffee beans, the sound of melodious music, and the solemn chants for Buddha can be heard...

Thanks to the volunteers for their selfless devotion to each family, and caring for all our clinical medical staff, they not only feed us but also heal our hearts. It is really satisfying, I am so happy to have you! I am blessed.