



## Male Nurse Diary

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# Good-Bye Summer

It was a hot summer day. With my favorite designer bag, I boarded a taxi for the first time ever in front of the station. “Please, to the mortuary.”

I have been working in the nursing field for a few years. Whenever I talked about my nursing career, the first thing that came to mind was this memorable event. That was my first time to attend a patient’s funeral.

I remember prior to my military service, I came to Hualien Tzu Chi hospital to work as a nursing assistant, and then I became a registered nurse afterward. Aunt Huang was the one of my patients. She was admitted with difficulty of breathing. After several examinations, she was diagnosed with adenocarcinoma (lung cancer). Aunt Huang’s lungs were filled with liquids from those cancer cells’ excretion. She coughed every night and couldn’t sleep well. This type of cancer advances quite rapidly. Doctor told her family that she probably had about 3 months left. I was taking minutes with family members and heard the diagnosis. I felt so sad. If she was my mom and pronounced only 100 days left to live, I would be so devastated. My eyes filled with tears.

Aunt Huang was a single mother with two optimistic sisters, a good son and a beautiful daughter. The daughter was a freshman in college and she came to visit every day after work. She sat next to her

mother, asked about how she felt and any daily news. There were many patients around her without family members accompanying. Even though she was a single mother, she had family members' company every day. She seldom rang for help, and always thanked all the nursing staff.

If you were told to have only 100 days to live and you have children, what do you do?

Perhaps it was life experience or religious faith; the families of Aunt Huang were surprisingly calm. They treasured every moment with Aunt Huang who was always upbeat with each examination and treatment.

“Even if it is painful, I still will deal with it,” said Huang smiling in pain.

The most frequent visitors were her younger sister and daughter. They were very close to Huang. After a while, I called their nicknames, Little Aunt and Sister, respectively. With these small talks, I get to understand a patient's feeling regarding the end of life care. Aunt Huang said Sister is very independent, but still couldn't hide her worries. Coincidentally, I saw a TV episode, “The White Giant Tower.” It is about a doctor fighting his cancer. Since the doctor will not live to see his kid growing up, so he made several recordings for the son and hoped to share with his son on his birthday every year. That



way he could share his concerns as his son grows up. I shared this story with Aunt Huang and encouraged her to write a diary by recording a few days of life journey. At the same time, it would give her family something to cherish. She replied sternly with a smile, “Yes!”

Then I went on to serve the military duty and had to say good-bye to Aunt Huang and wished them well. Her sister Little Aunt insisted to leave the daughter's contact information with me. Then I gave Aunt a hug and left Hualien. I left my heart with Aunt Huang. During the orientation, I had little time to call. But I called them every time after I spoke with my families. I shared with Aunt Huang about the orientation and heard what she was going through. After that, I also maintained contact with them.

One afternoon in July, Aunt Huang's daughter sent a message that Aunt Huang had passed away. I was in shock, because I forgot that her days were numbered. I then asked for the date of the memorial service and arranged my schedule for it. Now I am on my way to Hualien.

The sun was shining brightly at Hualien, I felt the baggage in my hand grew heavier and heavier. I remember it was December when Aunt Huang first came to the hospital. It is now



July so her life was extended for more than six to seven months. Aunt Huang never complained about the painful fluid extraction or target medications.

“Ā Háo, You are here,” said Little Aunt.

While giving her the paper origamis that I made last few days to pray for Aunt Huang, Little Aunt hugged me in tears and led me to a chair labeled “God son/ daughter” that was right next to Aunt Huang's children. I was so touched that because I was treated like a family member. The projected screen was showing the life of Aunt Huang and her battle with cancer. I saw my pictures with them, and my eyes were misty. I could see the diary written by Aunt Huang. She wrote: “I accept my fate and bravely accept the challenge that god instilled in me.” Aunt Huang used her life battle to teach us – other than complaints, and discouragement, there are other ways to face the challenges.” With blessing of everyone, Aunt Huang was finally at peace.

Traditionally, in Taiwan, people usually avoid funerals because of superstition. In nursing, we were taught to maintain a professional relationship with patients. However, during these two years in clinical career, I felt discouraged and wanted to quit. Because of this incident, the appreciation from Aunt Huang's family members, they encouraged me to continue my nursing journey. One can make nursing as just a job or not to think about it after work. I chose to give the patient a warm hug, a high-five, a smile to make them feel the warmth. I think it is worthwhile. It doesn't take much time to show some affection towards patients. I wish everyone will become an angel for a patient and their families.

This article is dedicated to Aunt Huang. I want to thank you for teaching us a life lesson. I wish you happily in heaven with no pain.