

Life Guardian in Surgical ICU

**Tsai Yi-Ting, RN,
Surgical ICU, Taipei
Tzu Chi Hospital**

“Beep, beep, beep...” the life-sustaining machine screamed due to low blood oxygen. Then someone cried anxiously, “Grandpa, can you hear me? Grandpa, Grandpa?” “Senior, hurry up, please,” I shouted for help. Suddenly, the machine sounded more irritating, signaling a sharp drop in heartbeat. “Get the pace-maker,” I shouted again. The pacemaker didn’t start quick enough, so I started CPR. “Give me a shot of Epinephrine, start CPR at 20:07, one, two, and three...”

During the CPR, the emergency phone rang, it was the operating room calling that there was a patient just finished CABG surgery. They needed help to transport a patient back to ICU for observation. I was caught between a rock and a hard place. One senior said to me, “Don’t worry, just leave everything to us, we’ll take care of it.” Then seniors divided diverged, one continued CPR, the other helped to transport a patient from the operating room. The above pictures are like medical television drama happening to me. I am a male nurse; these are my daily life in the surgical ICU.

When I graduated from Tzu Chi University and left the army, I came to the intensive care unit of Taipei Tzu Chi hospital and started my nursing career. However, most of my friends were surprised when they heard my decision. “How brave you are! Among all the medical departments you chose the most difficult as your starting point!” In fact, I have already forgotten why I made that decision. I believe it was the influence of my school teachers Ms. Hsieh Mei-Lin

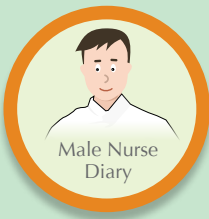
and Ms. Jiang Jiin-Ling, my college tutors. Both of them started their nursing career in ICU and they are specialized with their professions, which inspired me imperceptibly during the college life. Since I had been a soldier for one year I had forgotten most of knowledge from lessons, also I had no experience with ICU, I was worried about my first job before I actually started work. Although nervous at first, through learning and problem solving with each detail I encountered, I adjusted to work smoothly.

There was an uncle whose blood vessel was very fragile because he was born with Reye's syndrome. He came into ICU because of cerebrovascular accident, and the CT scan revealed almost half of his brain was filled with blood. Senior told me that the patient's wife was ringing the bell, she wanted come in and stay with him one the last time. I asked for a clearance from a physician on duty, then let the aunt in. She thanked me at first when she came in. Then she went to uncle bedside, wiping tears from her face, "Daddy (his children), wake up quickly, please. We are all waiting for you."

Although I have seen many pictures about life and death before, I still felt touched for my uncle and aunt at that time. I brought a chair to her and she turned to me, "Nurse, he was looking fine this morning, and how could it happen so fast? Can he wake up again?"

I saw her tearful eyes and heard her question, I felt sad and replied, "Aunty, I understand how you feel. It may because of uncle's fragile blood vessels and the sudden change in weather. Please take care of yourself, or uncle may feel worried..." Aunty reached out holding his hand, "You know, his hand is so cold now. I used to enjoy holding his hand the most because his hand is always warm and thick, and I feel relieved





as soon as I hold his hand..." My heart broke with these touches. A few days later, with families decision to remove his life support, shortly, this patient left us to go to heaven with the angels... I experienced life vicissitude and impermanence. Thank you, uncle angel!

Since working in the ICU for more than one year, we compete with life and death every day. Facing with critically ill patients, I feel like a life guardian. With my profession and enthusiasm, through delicate nursing care, I try my best to save each patient's life. And nursing makes me deeply realize the preciousness and impermanence of life, because no one knows who will win the tug of war with death...