



Thank Heart Lotus Volunteers for Palliative Care Support

By Wang Cheng-Fen, Internal Medicine Nurse Practitioner, Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital

Early in the morning, they walk softly along the hallway, or in-and-out of the Heart Lotus Ward. They quietly arrange teas in the Buddhist prayer room, sweeping dropped leaves in the patients' garden, and help distributing meals for the midnight shift nurses. They are our respectful palliative care volunteers.

The Heart Lotus volunteers are specially trained for palliative care of terminally ill patients and their families. Their services include simple chores such as hair cutting and bathing. They also assist feeding and exercising and even more in-depth companionship with patients. With routine services and long-term interaction, the volunteers establish mutual trust with the patients and their families. They also work harmoniously and interact smoothly with our medical team. The Heart Lotus volunteers participate in weekly Palliative Care meeting every Wednesday. During these meetings, medical and psychological personnel, and social workers get together to discuss individual cases. Volunteers would also share their experience in terms of their interaction. They follow the medical team during rounds so that they can assist patients and families as needed.

Softly and empathetically, the volunteers would talk to the family members of the patients in the café. They would casually chat on the weather, the seasons of the year, the scenic natural, etc. With a cup of steaming tea between them, the conversations are just like between old friends. As for the food, the volunteers would try every possible approach to satisfy the patients' desire.



Visit of the Tzu Chi Artists Team to the Heart Lotus Ward.

The volunteers are all proud of their outdoor garden. Rain or shine, there is always someone carefully tending the flowers. They planted osmanthus, jasmines, mountain hibiscuses, grapevines, loquats, passion fruits, and many more. Patients take sunbaths under the plants, and their family members can also relax in the shades. Many nurses also go to the garden and pick flowers for their patients.

There are volunteers for tea arts, food preparations, gardening, and other specialties. They are the powerful support of the palliative care team. These volunteers never stop serving. Their positive attitude provides the stability for the patients, the families and the professionals.

Heart Lotus volunteers also serve as comforting parents of the palliative care team. Their aromatic tea starts our daily routine. Their delicious refreshment jump starts our energy in our daily work. Furthermore, every month there is a special day that they treat us with their homemade gourmet dishes. We would chat and eat just like under the care of our own parents. Our comforting parents also carefully maintain every details of the palliative care of the hospital, so that the area appears warm and comfortable.

The entire palliative care team loves our volunteers. We thank them for their boundless love. We return that love in-kind in terms of quality care to our patients.