



A Novice Male Nurse in Palliative Care Ward

**By Liu Yu Kuan,
RN, 6C Palliative
Care Ward,
Taipei Tzu Chi
Hospital**

The decision to stay on a job is very difficult to make for a new comer. One of the important factors is the work environment. After my graduation from the five year professional college, I decided to stay in school for a two-year specialist training. Based on my personal interest and recommendations of my senior friends, I chose to enter the Palliative Care Ward of the Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital.

Different from the cold feeling of most of other hospitals, Tzu Chi Hospital offers a warm atmosphere once you walk into it. Maybe because of the soft lighting, maybe from the color of the flooring, or just because of the smiling volunteers (bodhisattvas) all around the building, you don't have the lost feeling as in other hospitals. Palliative Care Ward provides 12 beds. The structure and the hardware arrangement are simple, and therefore it is very easy for a new worker to get familiar with. There is also a group of friendly staff who always extend their helping hands for the new comers. All these are encouraging elements for an intern like me to stay on my career track.

During my two years of special NPGY (Nurse of post-graduated year) training, I was fortunate to be under the clinical mentoring of a senior nurse, like me she is also graduated from Tzu Chi University of Science and Technology. She is



calm, careful, cheerful, warm, and always carrying a sweet smile. Even though she graduated a year earlier, I always follow her personal attitude and professional skills as my career example. I really appreciate her teaching throughout the years. There are significant differences between an intern and a formal nurse. As a nurse, I have to take responsibility for every little thing I do. It doesn't matter whether it's serving medicine, taking clinical notes, performing nursing tasks, and many more duties. They are all suddenly falling on a true nurse's shoulder. Nursing is a front line contact between the patient and the other health care personnel. I must be knowledgeable and be able to cover everything that possibly happens in the ward. We are the care taker and speaker for the patient, the communicator, the instructor, and the consultant. We need to contact other members of the medical team at the proper time, and we have to be very sensitive. Luckily, with the help of my senior mentors, I was able to smoothly step over the transition line and actually enter the career I was longing for.

I enjoy the free and easy spirit in the poetry by the famous poet Xú zhímó: "With a soft flick of the sleeves without taking away a trace of the cloud." Life is just an uncertainty, death does not threaten me. That is one important reason that I chose nursing and to continue my practice in palliative care. During my first year working in the ward, I witnessed so many patients finished their live journeys. From these experiences, I realized that let go is not that easy. To let go of that bonding between loved ones is not easy to describe. We, as members in the palliative care team are not just care takers of the patients. We take care of the deceased, the whole family, and



even the whole community. We need to make sure the peaceful ending of patient's body, mind and spirit. We also need to make sure that patient's wish is fulfilled and patient's family members are well consoled.

Our future is unpredictable. Some lives burn out like a little match while some like a thick candle. A sudden blow of wind can extinguish a steady flame; a sudden accident may end a happy life. I witnessed a 29 year old male brain tumor patient. He was the father of two lovely children - seven and two-year old. I stood helplessly to observe the sadness of his young wife. Meanwhile, I also found the strength hidden in her sadness.

Seize the moment; make good use of today, because we are alive. Many of the patients' family members are amazed that I work in palliative care at such a young age. Yes? It is true, the decision was not easy. The path is not always straightforward. From the very beginning, I had no idea what involved in this line of work. But at the current time I feel proud of this career. Now, I can tell other junior nurses of the ward that I am so proud to be a palliative care nurse. Thanks to my mentors and to the family members of my patients, I am so grateful that we share a small portion of our lives together. Thank you!