

# A Surgeon, a Son

**By Yu Cheng-Chan,  
Director of the General Surgery Department, Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital**

“Should I lay a hand on my own father? Operating on him?” I said to myself.

There was a small growth in my father’s liver. Although the tumor is small, its location prompted doctors to conclude surgery as the best course of action. (I said to myself, “Wait, isn’t that my expertise?”)

Our ancestors say, “anxiety breeds chaos”, now more commonly known as the “VIP syndrome”. When dealing with family members, one may be overcome with emotion that affects objectivity in diagnosis. Therefore, in the past, other colleagues would take over, but this time, I had to be the one. It is not due to a lack of qualified individuals who can perform the operation. However, even though it is fairly routine it is my specialty and I wanted to have the best possible procedure. After a long debate, I decided to perform the procedure before the Chinese New Year, resecting a small portion of the liver using a minimally invasive procedure.

It would be a lie if I said there was no hesitation. Before the procedure, I repeatedly convinced myself that it was merely another patient lying in the



**After the surgery, Yu Cheng-Chan and his father took a picture together.**

surgery room and that all would be good if I performed according to the routine. I asked for both Buddha’s and Guan Yu’s blessing, since I considered the latter as god to protect surgeons, and I would recite scripture before the procedure. I tried to stick to the routine and enter the surgery room after my assistants laid all the sheets, showing only the area of incision to block out any extra thoughts.

I’m fairly sure not many have had the same experience as me--cutting through my father’s skin, feeling his temperature, examining his pumping heart, seeing the

organs that nourished me throughout my childhood. However, I could not continue that thought, as I needed to complete the procedure. If I followed the procedure, everything would go well.

The operation was successful, and the blood loss was under control. When I walked away from the operation table, however, I felt like I was about to collapse. My heart was empty. The sight of my father buried in a myriad of tubes and moaning immediately transformed me back into a son. At least the surgery was over; otherwise, I would not have been able to perform the procedure in this state. I guess the power of the heavens

had helped me through this task.

Afterwards, my wife and daughter came to visit. Before leaving, my daughter said, "I'll visit you again!" My father then muttered, "Don't! It must be troubling to come to the hospital!" My father's recovery was fairly smooth, and he argued about going home after two days, setting my personal record. I knew that he was still in pain though; he just did not want us to be in the hospital all the time.

My forty-fifth birthday is approaching. In light of that, I hope my family can live a healthy and carefree life. And I hope that all the patients that I handled will recover smoothly.



**Dr. Yu Cheng-Chan performs surgery on his own father.**