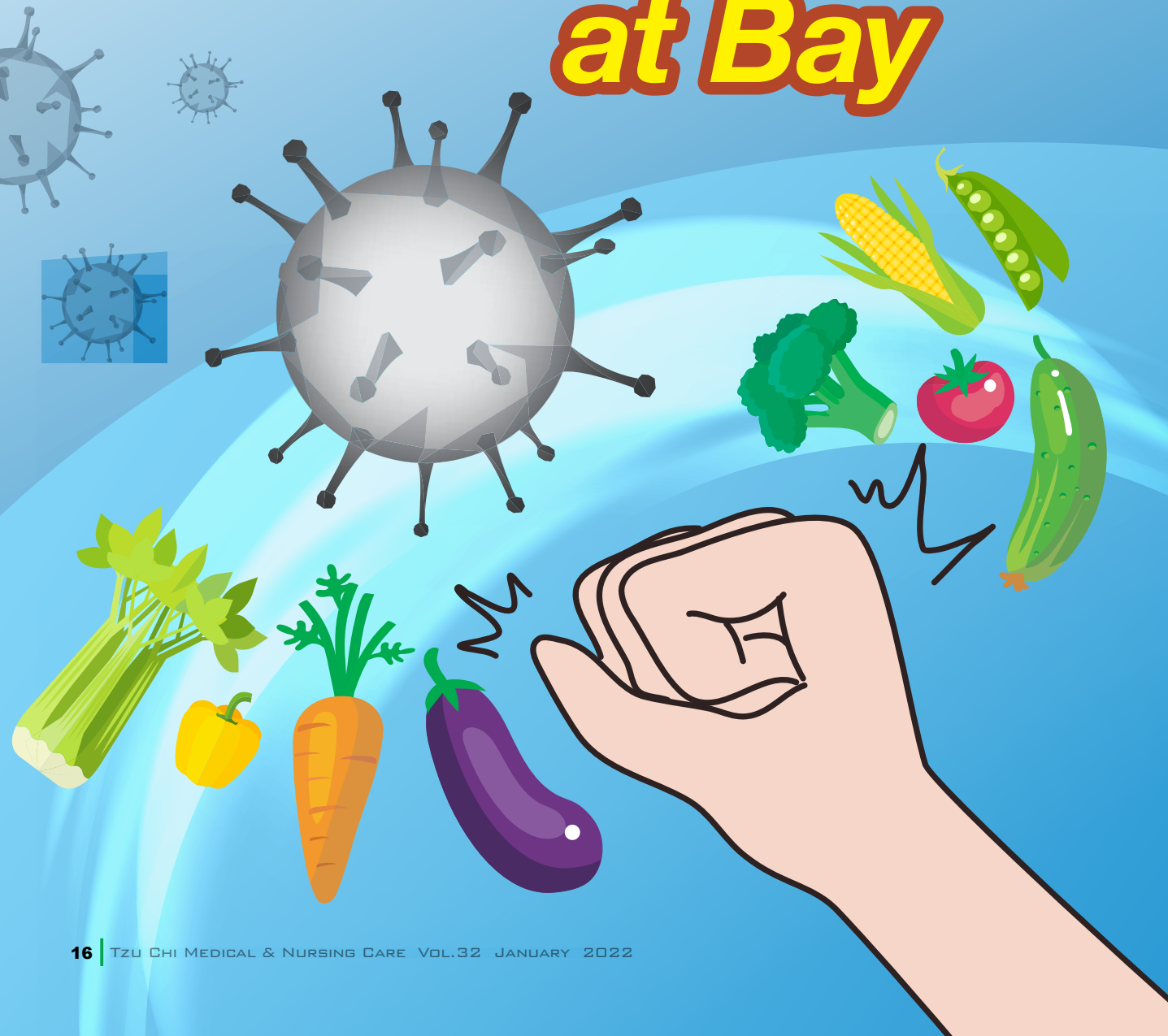


Vegan Vogue

Keeps Epidemics at Bay





By Liao Wei-Ching

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 reminded all of us of the importance of cherishing our planet and all living creatures. Tzu Chi members all over the world successively launched activities to promote vegetarian diets. They made vows to fast, abstain from meat, and eliminate their oral cravings. They also prayed for an early end to this terrifying pandemic.

As of 2020, Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital prints and issues vegetarian meal vouchers to subcontractors and foreign caregivers to make a contribution to promoting vegetarian diets. Vegetarian dinners are provided to employees and their families to inspire them to join the ranks of plant-based diet and environmental protection promoters. In early 2021, clinicians set an example by taking an active part in promoting vegetarianism. The health benefits of plant-based diets are clarified with empirical data and bookmarks with cute illustrations and recipes are printed and issued to patients in cooperation with the medical care and nutrition departments, the public communication and humanities offices, and the Tzu Chi Foundation. The hospital strives to educate patients on the physical benefits of vegetarian diets and achieve the dual goal of health protection and valid contributions to guarding our planet.

The inspiration for the bookmarks can be traced back to January 2021. Superintendent Chao You-Chen still recalls how the idea emerged: “There is abundant scientific evidence showing the health promoting effects of vegetarian diets which can help prevent or alleviate numerous life-threatening diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular, kidney, and blood



Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital issues cute vegetarian bookmarks to patients – Superintendent Chao You-Chen takes the lead in promoting plant-based diets by explaining their health benefits to the public.



Vice Superintendent Chang Heng-Chia of the Cardiovascular Department explains the positive effects of vegetarian diets on the cardiovascular system.

diseases. The venerable master pointed out that patients in physical pain are particularly open to health advice from their doctors. With a view to ensuring that they will remember this advice, the master suggested that we print the messages and related images on bookmarks to imprint them in the minds of the patients and allow them to share valuable health advice with their family members.”

After the genesis of this concept, medical care departments provided empirically-based scientific data related to vegetarianism, while the nutrition departments offered vegetarian recipes and detailed information on the nutritional value of plant-based diets. The Public Communication Office is responsible for layout design and the Humanities Office enlisted senior disciple Ling Wan-Qi (pseudonym Ling Aban), a skilled illustrator in the Compilation Division of Tzu Chi Foundation, to assist in the creation of attractive illustrations. The ultimate goal was to manufacture a series of highly aesthetic and practical bookmarks. Upon several discussions and revisions, the following consensus was reached: The front side aims to describe the health benefits of vegetarian diets with the aid of empirical data and vivid and cute illustrations in an easily intelligible manner. The reverse side



The front side of the bookmarks features easily intelligible descriptions of the benefits of plant-based diets, while the reverse side explains unique characteristics and nutritional value of such diets, respectively. The reverse side also provides QR codes to vegetarian recipes which enable the public to craft their own delicious meals.

explains unique characteristics and nutritional value of such diets with the aid of relevant images. QR codes to recipes provide the public with a better understanding of relevant ingredients and enable them to craft their own delicious meals.

In a treatment room of the Department of Gastroenterology, Superintendent Chao handed over a bookmark to a 77-year-old lady and remarked with a smile: “You already eat vegetarian on the first and fifteenth of every lunar month, which is great. If you could turn this into a daily habit, your body would benefit even more. Here is a bookmark that you can share



Dr. Peng Ching-Hsiu shares with his patients how the right vegetarian diet can help reduce the burden on the kidneys.



The reverse side of the bookmarks features vegetarian recipes with nutritional values and calorie counts. The goal is to make people realize that vegetarian meals are easy to prepare, delicious, and healthy.





Dr. Yu Min-Chien of the Chinese Medicine Dept. utilizes expedient means to promote vegetarianism. He employs soft persuasion techniques to convince patients to happily embrace plant-based diets without unnecessarily upsetting them.

with younger members of your family.” She took the bookmark and agreed with a grin.

Physicians in all departments offer these bookmarks to their patients. Mr. Yang, a 45-year-old patient, who switched to a plant-based diet over ten years ago, returns to the hospital for follow-up appointments on a regular basis. He has followed the superintendent’s example by adopting an almost meat-free diet. He points out that vegetarian diets provide energy and vitality and reduce the physiological burden. When he



Dr. Kuo Ko-Lin of the Nephrology Department reports that the vegetarian diet bookmarks facilitate the promotion of vegetarianism due to their persuasiveness based on the quoting of medical research data, which ensures comparability. If patients can’t switch to vegetarian diets immediately, it is recommended that they gradually reduce their meat intake and adjust their diets in a step-be-step manner.

received his bookmark, he exclaimed delightedly: “Most people only have a very superficial understanding of vegetarian cuisine. These recipes are awesome! I will share them with my family members.” Ms. Wang, who is in her eighties, stated with a smile that she hasn’t touched meat in a long time because of her bad teeth, but she would give the bookmark to her daughter-in-law so they could learn more about the benefits of vegetarianism.

Currently available bookmarks describe the benefits of plant-based diets in the prevention of colon cancer, cardiovascular disease, and kidney disease. It is planned to successively add bookmarks for other diseases such as cataracts, diabetes, cognitive impairments, blood cholesterol, leukemia, breast cancer, and prostate cancer. Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital spares no effort in the promotion of vegetarianism. A new campaign launched in 2021 aims to achieve positive results through the distribution of beautifully designed bookmarks in an outpatient environment. It is explained to expand this campaign which serves as a vanguard for stylish vegetarianism to clinical units with the goal of improving the health of patients and convey the charm of vegetarian cuisine.



Through the cooperation and mutual assistance of all units, the bookmarks were successfully distributed in different stages. Physicians of all departments and divisions handed out these bookmarks to patients during outpatient hours and



Physicians of all departments of the Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital promote vegetarianism by relying on empirical research results. The ultimate goal is to popularize vegetarian diets and thereby achieve health promoting effects.

gained valuable insights over a period of several weeks. Mr. Yu Min-Chien, Director of the Chinese Medicine Dept., reveals that “I don’t tell my patients what will happen if they consume meat because this is upsetting for them. Instead, I encourage them, show empathy, and advocate the benefits of vegetarian diets with the aid of the bookmarks.” He points out that he utilizes expedient means to promote vegetarianism. He suggests that patients try a vegetarian diet for one week. Soft requests tend to increase the level of acceptance on the part of patients and help achieve the ultimate goal of promoting vegetarianism.

Low-protein and vegetarian diets are ideal for kidney disease patients. However, it is a daunting task to convince meat-eaters to immediately become vegetarians. Dr. Kuo Ko-Lin of the Nephrology Department reports that “if a patient asks me how to improve his poor kidney functions, I give him a vegetarian diet bookmark. Comparability based on research data serves as a confidence booster. I also recommend that they take their time if they find it hard to switch to vegetarian diets immediately. The first step is to reduce the intake of animal protein by 20%. Step-by-step adjustments can be achieved through dietary control. As the physical health improves, acceptance levels increase and plant-based diets are adopted spontaneously.”