

A Glimmer of Hope Lighting Up the Darkness of the Pandemic

Chien Sou-Hsin, Superintendent of Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital

Close to 20,000 rapid tests have been performed in local enterprises and communities, over 25,000 individuals have been vaccinated, and around 40,000 cc of blood have been donated for the sake of society. These impressive figures are the result of the selfless contributions and sacrifices of the Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital staff members in the field of epidemic prevention. These efforts resemble a glimmer of hope lighting up the darkness of the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic struck at the end of 2019, spreading like a wildfire across the whole planet. Emerging new variants are characterized by a constantly increasing transmissibility. No end was in sight in 2021. Circulating rumors related to the pandemic spark anxiety and fear among the public, engulfing the world in a never-ending darkness. Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital has made an active commitment to epidemic prevention in line with the Great Education concept advocated by



Dharma Master Cheng Yen based on profound reflections on the epidemic. Our team is deeply aware of the omnipresent dangers caused by this prolonged struggle between humanity and the virus. Since all members of society are exposed to these dangers, mental unrest is one

of the greatest concerns. Our staff is fully committed to serving as a stabilizing force in society based on a spirit of love and compassion in the face of the spreading epidemic.

Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital's efforts to stabilize society are gradually expanded from the hospital itself to the social environment. After a nationwide Level 3 alert was imposed in mid-May, the hospital summoned its staff members in an urgent manner on non-working days to conduct immediate rapid testing for inpatients and accompanying family members and thereby turn the hospital into a safe stronghold. In addition to existing self-paid screening stations in the emergency department, supplementary stations have been set up for inpatients and accompanying family members to reinforce the line of defense and thereby increase the safety of patients and visitors. This was followed by the designation of special wards for admission of quarantined individuals and confirmed COVID-19 patients. Teams of the Division of Thoracic Medicine and Division of Infectious Diseases were immediately assigned to provide medical care for seriously ill patients. Numerous members of the Divisions for Internal Medicine and Surgery have volunteered to join the ranks of employees on the COVID-19 duty roster.

In response to requests by the Taichung City Government, an outdoor rapid testing station for local communities we set up between the two hospital areas. Our staff members provide services to the public with great passion and enthusiasm on workdays and holidays even under inclement weather conditions. This community testing station also provides emergency frontline support outside the hospital premises as required at locations designated by local health authorities. Our epidemic prevention task force is dispatched immediately whenever there is a potential danger that certain locations such as municipal elementary school campuses, wet markets along the mountain line, or areas as far away as Miaoli could turn into infection hotspots.

After confirmed cases were reported by numerous enterprises, rapid testing services in enterprises turned into a key task in the field of epidemic prevention. Staff members of Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital proceeded to the Taichung City Precision Machinery Innovation Technology Park, took the initiative in offering support to areas in Miaoli that are characterized by a lack of medical resources, and assisted a biotech company in the regular administration of rapid testing. Over 16,000 individuals have been tested at the rapid testing stations which have been set up in local

communities and enterprises in the period from May 20 to July 27.

Due to the fact that rapid testing services are almost exclusively provided in outdoor areas, our staff members who always wear protective clothing in the performance of their duties are exposed to extremely hot environments. Their hands which are covered by gloves are always drenched in perspiration. So much sweat is streaming down their backs that a layer of salt could be scraped off their skin. All co-workers on COVID duty are forced to don heavy protective gear, which is an extremely touching sight. Insufficient water intake during these assignments can lead to serious dehydration. An excessive intake, on the other hand, also raises concerns since their heavy workloads do not leave them enough time to relieve themselves. The deep marks left by their N95 masks on their facial skin symbolize their selfless sacrifices which are profoundly engraved in my heart.

A total of 26,938 individuals have been vaccinated and support has been provided for 712 individuals at rapid vaccination stations from June 15 to the end of July. All participating co-workers wholeheartedly embrace their duties without a word of complaint. Once the Center for Infection Control receives a mission and the number of sessions and the location have been announced,

our staff members spontaneously step forward and eagerly sign up for such assignments. They have received high praise and recognition for their formidable efficiency. As the superintendent of this hospital, I have genuinely witnessed this unparalleled team spirit.

As long as it is within our ability and no hidden profit motives are involved, Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital is willing to accept all requests associated with rapid testing and vaccination station services and take on tasks that no one else is willing to commit to. It is our sacred duty to fulfill our responsibility to perpetuate Tzu Chi Medical Mission which was founded by Dharma Master Cheng Yen. This is based on a profound understanding that every contribution creates positive momentum for the stabilization of society.

By administering over 10,000 rapid tests, we have set a record unmatched by most hospitals in Taiwan. We are deeply grateful to Dharma Master Cheng Yen and the Tzu Chi Foundation for their continued support and funding, which has enabled us to spread the power of love and compassion to the frontline of epidemic prevention without any concerns or worries.

In the tensest moments of the pandemic, the clinical workload was significantly lower due to the pandemic, but the loving dedication of our staff

remained undiminished. I have gained a full understanding of their initial drive to pursue a career in healthcare, which is clearly reflected in their willingness to participate in joint efforts to combat the pandemic and their devotion to fulfilling their roles. Our medical teams also demonstrated their commitment to a top-down approach and cultivation of their minds in a determined attempt to improve their overall performance.

Based on my up-close observations of our co-workers, it seems that exhaustion is an alien concept to them and that they all take deep pride in being members of the Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital staff. All our healthcare workers are fully aware of the fact that we can't allow people to be gripped by fear and horror in the face of this pandemic. We must join hands and stand united in these difficult times. By demonstrating our abilities in the field of organized care and offering the best protection through the positive force of love, we can provide valuable assistance to people facing hardship and help them weather this crisis.

It is very heartening that our staff members have remained true to their calling despite being showered with loving care and donations from all walks of society. As the alert level was lowered, we launched compassionate blood donation drives in cooperation with blood centers to

overcome the reluctance of hospital staff to participate in routine blood donation campaigns. This drive resulted in around 40,000 cc of blood in 156 bags, which represents a passionate contribution to society.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen has constantly reminded us to embrace the concept of Great Education during this pandemic – This involves gratitude for the blessings of the past, careful reflection, restraint of desires, and removal of ignorance in the pursuit of disaster abatement. During their epidemic prevention efforts, the Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital staff members also placed high emphasis on building a strong physique. In an attempt to identify more solutions through optimized processes, they made a determined effort to view issues from the perspective of patients and their family members with the ultimate goal of gaining the ability to provide more human-centered and competitive healthcare services. We firmly believe that there is always light at the end of the tunnel and the digitization of epidemic prevention represents a glimmer of hope. It is our deep conviction that the beautiful light of dawn will soon appear if we persist in our efforts.