

The Love and Legacy of Tzu Chi Orthopedics

By Yang Chin-Yen, Hong Jing-Ru, Lin Tzu-Yi, Tseng Ching-Fang

Amid the rapid development of orthopedics, a group of orthopedic surgeons willingly embark on long journeys to serve in remote areas. With their skills and courage, they joined hands over the past thirty years in cultivating talents in Taiwan's orthopedic field and pioneering new technological paradigms.

In the afternoon of August 30, 2023, Tzu Chi Medical Foundation (Taiwan) held a book launch titled "Medical Path: Heroic Spirit and Gentle Compassion" at Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualien. Despite the presence of a typhoon, the venue was packed with attendees eager to hear doctors share their stories of creating miracles for patients;



starting from scratch, upholding the mission of healers, and embracing the medical path.

Tzu Chi Medical Foundation (Taiwan) CEO Lin Chin-Ion, Tzu Chi Foundation Deputy CEO Lin Pi-Yu, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital Honorary Supt. Chen Ing-Ho, Supt. Lin Shinn-Zong, Director Yu Tzai-Chiu, Director Hsu Shih-Hsiang, Director Wu Wen-Tien, Douliu Tzu Chi Hospital Supt. Chien Jui-Teng, and others, attended the event to share their insights. Patients Lin Chuanqin and Chen Tuanzhi, who live far from Hualien, expressed their gratitude and blessings through video messages.

Journey through the Tunnel of Time: Tracing the Arduous Beginnings of Tzu Chi Hospital

In planning the Tzu Chi veteran Physicians Biography Series, the driving force behind preserving the precious history of Tzu Chi healthcare is CEO Lin Chin-Lon. In his emotional remarks, he mentioned that seeing Deputy CEO Lin Pi-Yu, several orthopedic surgeons, and volunteer Yen Hui-Mei, felt like a trip back nearly forty years ago when Dharma Master Cheng Yen founded the Buddhist Tzu Chi General Hospital, beginning its journey. That group worked



From left: Volunteer Ms. Yen Hui-Mei, Wu Wen-Tien, Yu Tzai-Chiu, Tzu Chi Foundation Vice CEO Ms. Lin Pi-Yu, Chen Ing-Ho, Chien Jui-Teng, Tzu Chi Medical Foundation CEO Lin Chin-Lon, & Hsu Shih-Hsiang.



tirelessly in establishing the hospital, and, with the guidance of Deputy CEO Lin, succeeded.

“Under the leadership of Supt. Chen Ing-Ho, Tzu Chi Orthopedics has made outstanding progress, not only maturing and producing results, but also branching out, thriving and expanding. Orthopedic medical talents are now contributing greatly at eight Tzu Chi hospitals and one clinic dedicated to Tzu Chi’s medical mission. What’s truly remarkable is that the Supt. not only selflessly imparts medical skills but also demonstrates trust to others - empowering individuals to develop independently. Under his love and guidance, each elite professional has

forged his/her own path.”

When Dharma Master Cheng Yen first proposed to build a hospital in the eastern region, Deputy CEO Lin Pi-Yu immediately raised her hand to offer support. She witnessed the process of building the Buddhist Tzu Chi General Hospital from scratch. She said that at that time, there was no money, no staff, and no land. It was Master Cheng Yen’s unwavering faith, courage, and perseverance that inspired Tzu Chi volunteers to follow-up. With widespread loving support from the public, Tzu Chi Hospital was finally established and inaugurated. Today, what touches Lin the most is seeing “Mama Tu” or Mrs. Tu



The 98 year-old Tu Chang Yao-Zhen (second from left), the wife of the founding Supt. of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital Dr. Tu Shih-Mien came to do voluntary work with her daughter (3rd from left)’s company while available. The now Supt. Lin Shinn-Zong (left) and Ms. Yen Hui-Mei (right) shows gratitude.

Chang Yao-Zen, the wife of the founding superintendent of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, Tu Shih-Mien. At the age of 98, she came to the scene in robust health to show her support.

Deputy CEO Ms. Lin recalled the challenging early days of the hospital's founding, when she and Supt. Du were running back and forth almost every day in the central corridor of National Taiwan University Hospital, trying to recruit doctors to come to Hualien. At a time when she felt most helpless, Dr. Chen Ing-Ho stopped her one day and said, "Are you looking for a doctor? I am willing to go to Hualien! A doctor should go where the patients need him." (Earlier, Dr. Chen Ing-Ho had already been persuaded by his mentor, Dr. Tanggui Liu, and he agreed with his teacher's suggestion). "My eyes widened in great surprise, and I still feel that way today. That's how Dr. Chen Ing-Ho became the first doctor in Tzu Chi's medical mission." Amid thunderous applause, Lin praised, "in the beginning, there was a shortage of doctors, and Dr. Chen Ing-Ho not only specialized in orthopedics but also excelled in plastic surgery, such as reattaching fingers and reconnecting severed palms. He is not only a doctor; he works in general affairs, cleaning, nursing - everything. He doesn't mind any tasks and devotes himself wholeheartedly to each one."

Lin, familiar with the history of Tzu Chi, continued, "The second doctor to join the orthopedics department is Dr. Yu Tzai-Chiu (Chinese name meaning No. 9). He's our 'Brother No. 9'. He has a "Brother 9 club" with over 10,000 fans (patients), and both Taiwanese and overseas doctors come to learn from him. Also joining was Dr. Hsu Shih-Hsiang, who started the orthopedic department with him, and has performed many difficult surgeries." In addition to doctors, there are volunteers who accompany the patients, truly implementing holistic healthcare at Tzu Chi, emphasizing the team approach at all times, and throughout the entire process.

Supt. Neurosurgeon Dr. Lin picked up the new book and recommended it with a smile, saying, "This book details the development of Tzu Chi's orthopedic team over the past 30 years, from the 'stone age' to modernization." He praised the orthopedic surgeons for their continuous innovation in developing various devices and artificial joints that are still leading the way in orthopedics today. In the early days of Tzu Chi Hospital, Supt. Chen Ing-Ho tried to develop and improve equipment and instruments to save many patients. "Brother 9" Yu Tzai-Chiu developed artificial joints suitable for Asians as early as 20 to 30 years ago, and has



won many awards. Chien Jui-Teng is known for his quick and skillful surgeries, excellent communication skills, and even for spontaneously composing traditional Taiwanese opera songs to connect with patients. Dr. Wu Wen-Tien uses the latest 3D printing technology to reconstruct severely damaged pelvic bones. Supt. Lin emphasized, “They not only have the medical skills, but also the humanistic culture!”

Gratitude from Dr. Chen Ing-Ho, Department of Orthopedics

When talking about Tzu Chi Orthopedics, it is impossible not to mention the groundbreaking surgeries performed by Dr. Chen Ing-Ho. He pioneered Taiwan’s first “Femoral Shortening and Total Hip Arthroplasty” and the country’s first “Pedicicle Subtraction Osteotomy”. His corrective surgery for ankylosing spondylitis kyphosis is unique in the world. Patients from Taiwan and overseas, who sought medical help for years without success, come to his clinic in search of hope. In 2009, at the invitation of the developers of the American textbook “Pediatric Spinal Surgery,” Dr. Chen Ing-Ho contributed a special chapter outlining the technique of pedicle subtraction osteotomy, sharing it with orthopedic surgeons worldwide.



Mr. Chen Ing-Ho, Honorary Supt. of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, said that Tzu Chi Orthopedics has grown and prospered. He is thankful for the founding of Tzu Chi Hospital by Master Cheng Yen, for the trust of each patient, and for the selflessness of the Tzu Chi Orthopedic staff.

Forever humble Dr. Chen Ing-Ho said he was most excited today to see the founding Supt.’s wife, Mama Tu, come to the scene and convey a warm and lasting sentiment. Reflecting on today’s achievement, he has three expressions of gratitude: “Firstly, gratitude to Dharma Master Cheng Yen for founding Tzu Chi Hospital, identifying excellent leaders, and serving patients together with Tzu Chi volunteer brothers and sisters. When the hospital administrator told us that Tzu Chi hospital is not about revenue, but, rather, to take care of patients in need, it resonated with our original inspiration as doctors. As a result, the orthopedic team not only came, but stayed happily ever since.”

“Secondly, gratitude to the patients. We must treat every patient as our family and respond carefully to every patient. This is called ‘treating the patients like family.’ To become a good doctor, one must learn and grow from every medical experience. Therefore, it is even more important to ‘take patients as teachers’ and treat patients with great respect and gratitude.”

“Thirdly, it is about mutual gratitude - from physician to physician, from teacher to student, and from peer to peer. Medicine is a public asset, and health care is a social responsibility. Therefore, we cannot simply utilize our knowledge, they must be passed on. In other words, health care itself is a continuity of doctors’ teachings, and it is a missionary task. Through leading by example and teaching, Supt. Chen, who has led the orthopedic team and emphasized the continuity of education, eloquently expresses the medical principles he has adhered to and practiced for over thirty years.”

Three Rounds a Day: Over Twenty-Six Thousand Trusts

Director Yu Tzai-Chiu, who usually focuses on medical consultations and surgeries and often refuses personal interviews, attended today’s book launch with a beaming smile. He mentioned

that he often advises his students, saying, “As a doctor, you should not only perform operations well, but also visit your patients three times a day during their hospitalization. Remember, those lying in the hospital beds are also your teachers.”

Director Yu, who rarely attends public events, said, “Today, I am here mainly to express my gratitude.” First, he thanked his mentor, “Brother Chen,” referring to the trust that Dr. Chen Ing-Ho placed upon him, and “He believes in my character, that I won’t perform surgeries recklessly. He believes in my seriousness, and he probably also believes in my compassion.” Amid laughter in the room, his smile suddenly faded, “But that trust also comes with



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a lot of pressure. When patients trust you to hand over a leg or a bone, you have to recognize the obligation. That is why I often tell my students that the first and most important quality of a doctor is responsibility. You have to take responsibility for your patients. Here, I would like to thank the more than 26,000 patients who gave us their trust; they are all my teachers.”

Dr. Yu Tzai-Chiu also mentioned an outstanding student sitting next to him, Chien Jui-Teng : “Chien Jui-Teng once thanked me for not giving up on him.” He took out a black and white photo from the book, “This was taken in Okinawa, Japan, during a seminar. It was midnight, but I didn’t let him and his associate Wu Wen-Tien go home. I asked them to make corrections to their work because I had a responsibility to them. They trusted me as their teacher, and that’s why I did this to them.”

Dr. Yu has high expectations for his students. He said with a smile, “In addition to being responsible for patients, you have to be better than me!” He joked that he was better than his own teacher. “If I ever need a surgery, I will definitely choose only my own students.” He has a 0.1 theory, which says that students only need to be 0.1 better than him; they shouldn’t just learn 0.9 of his skills. If this continues to the next generation, it would be 0.9 multiplied by 0.9, which is not

acceptable. Every generation must be 0.1 better! Finally, Director Yu expressed his gratitude and said, “The happiest and most grateful thing in my life is that I have many good sisters, brothers, friends, and students! Thank you all!”

Even though Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital is far away, it has such a strong orthopedic team that the orthopedic outpatient clinic is always bustling with patients. There are even patients who come from the northern regions, from other counties, and from overseas for medical treatment. Over the past thirty years, the medical team’s accomplishments have had a significant impact on the development of orthopedics and spinal surgeries in Taiwan. Dr. Chen Ing-Ho, a former Director of the Orthopedic Medical Association, made bold changes in the allocation and oral examination system for resident physicians. He also called on directors and physicians of orthopedic departments at institutions such as National Taiwan University Hospital, Taipei Veterans General Hospital, Chang Gung Memorial Hospital, and Tzu Chi Hospital to hold regular “Spinal Morning Meetings” to promote the exchange and advancement of orthopedic medical techniques. Dr. Yu Tzai-Chiu, who served as the chairman of the Spinal Surgery Medical Association and the Joint Reconstruction Medical Association,

continuously promoted the development, exchange, and progress status of information on spinal surgeries.

Regretfully - I Should Have Signed a 50-Year Contract

Dr. Hsu Shih-Hsiang is another pioneer in the orthopedic department of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, introducing the first wound VAC (vacuum-assisted closure of a wound) system in Taiwan. He has brought innovative concepts and techniques for wound management to the field of orthopedics, as documented in his book “Clinical Wounds Medicine”, which he has shared with the medical

community. Dr. Hsu mentioned that during his time at National Taiwan University Hospital, Dr. Chen Ing-Ho and his senior colleagues were idols for the young residents. As a result, he followed Dr. Chen Ing-Ho to Tzu Chi, and expressed his gratitude for Dr. Chen Ing-Ho’s guidance and support. “At that time, I was 33 years old, and I have been at Tzu Chi for exactly 33 years this year. Beginning with my student days, and over the past 38 years, I have grown and prospered under the guidance of Supt. Chen. Even when faced with difficult challenges, we still work together.”

Hsu Shih-Hsiang still remembers that, in the past, it was difficult to find



Director Hsu Shih-Hsiang (standing) thanks Superintendent Chen Ing-Ho for his continuous support. He joined Tzu Chi Hospital at the age of 33, and this year (2023) marks his 33rd anniversary.



doctors in remote areas. “Chen Ing-Ho, Kuo Hann-Chung, and other great doctors vowed in front of Master Cheng Yen to stay in Hualien and signed contracts with Tzu Chi for 30 years. We followed suit, but now I regret it. We should have signed contract for 50 years.” When he finished speaking, the audience burst into thunderous applause! Hsu Shih-Hsiang expressed gratitude to Brother Jiu and praised the younger generation. At that time, to persuade Chien Jui-Teng to come to Hualien, they had a conversation in a cafe in Taipei that lasted for more than three hours. After Chien Jui-Teng arrived in Hualien, they were afraid that he might run away, so whenever there was a chance, they invited him to dinner to strengthen the relationship. Hsu Shih-Hsiang is grateful to Chien Jui-Teng, Wu Wen-Tien, and other resident doctors who worked hard with them. They worked tirelessly from early morning until late at night, often working night shifts. When they returned home, it was often in the middle of the night. They frequently ate boxed meals all day and brought home unfinished dinners. “Residents willing to do this should be applauded. After five years of training, they have absorbed the essence and skills of various institutions. They continue to pass experience on to the next generation. I am truly grateful and respectful to these younger colleagues!”

Unreservedly Sharing Knowledge and Passing It Onwards

Director Wu Wen-Tien of the Orthopedic Department of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital expresses his gratitude. Over the past 30 years, he has been privileged to work in a good environment with a group of excellent teachers and colleagues. “Throughout this journey, our strongest belief has been to ‘save the patients and do things well’. This is the source of our motivation for continuous improvement. Just now, Brother 9 (Yu Tzai-Chiu) mentioned that we must be better than him. How can we be better than our teachers? I think the simplest way is to arrive at the hospital earlier than the teachers (applause resounds from the audience below) and spend more time thinking about how to serve the patients better.”

The overall planner of this book, who is also Supt. of Douliu Tzu Chi Hospital and Vice Supt. of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, Chien Jui-Teng, expressed his deep gratitude to the teachers on stage. He praised them for “selflessly sharing their skills and genuinely building relationships; these are the most important nutrients for the growth of Tzu Chi Orthopedics!” In recent years, Master Cheng Yen has repeatedly emphasized “evaluating the value of life.” Chien Jui-Teng believes

that as a medical professional, the focus should not be on seeking fame and fortune but on demonstrating an unwavering commitment and integrity, reflecting on personal practices and teachings of mentors. Especially in this era of confused medical values, he hopes that “medical ethics” emphasized in this book can extend to and influence the entire medical community. He expresses his gratitude for the mentors, whose selfless nurturing of their students has enabled the robust development of talents in the field of orthopedics - from the east to the west, from the back mountains to the front mountains.

Chien Jui-Teng showed a 1997 photo. In the front row were his classmates Lu Chih-Sheng and Wu



Dr. Wu Wen-Tien(standing) expresses his gratitude for having had the privilege to work in a good environment with a group of excellent teachers and colleagues over the past 30 years.

Wen-Tien. Standing behind them were teachers and senior students such as Chen Ing-Ho, Yu Tzai-Chiu, Hsu Shih-Hsiang, Huang Meng-Jen, Poon Win-Him, and others. It was a group photo taken to celebrate Chien Jui-Teng and his classmates completing five years of residency training, at a thank-you dinner for their mentors and senior students. He then presented photos from 2011, showing the orthopedic team and the patient Ah Yin. The photo was the same group of people, and he jokingly said, “The original team, never separated!” To this day, they remain at Tzu Chi, practicing medicine and caring for patients. The mentors continue to train excellent doctors. Dr. Poon Win-Him is rooted in Guanshan; Chien Jui-Teng has returned to his hometown of Dalin; Wu Wen-Tien is in charge of Hualien, and Mengren Huang is in charge of Taipei. The steadfast older generation and the robust middle-aged generation continue to produce many young and outstanding orthopedic doctors. They generously share their knowledge and constantly cultivate the progress and distribution of this knowledge.”

Chien Jui-Teng said, “I will faithfully adhere to the lessons of my teachers and mentors, saving lives and aiding the injured, practicing humility, respect, love, and care.” He will continue to work hard in Yun-Jia area to build a small Tzu



Dr. Chien Jui-Teng(left) thanks his mentor Dr. Chen Ing-Ho (left 2) and all seniors to build up the reputational Tzu Chi Orthopedics Dept. The right one is Prof. Fang Jyu-Hsiung at Tzu Chi University.



Chi Orthopedic team, passing on the principles of medical practice.

The Physicians Giving Red Envelopes to Their Patients

Embodying the principle of “patient-centered care”, Tzu Chi orthopedic physicians go above and beyond regular duties to address the unique body shapes and conditions of their patients. Chen Ing-Ho, for example, has diligently researched and developed new surgical techniques tailored to the specific needs of his patients. He even

personally scoured various stores in Hualien to select appropriate shoes for post-operative patients. Chen went the extra mile by personally trying on protective gear himself to demonstrate how patients could navigate stairs after surgeries. In a heartwarming gesture, he attended a patient's wedding, personally delivering a red envelope and offering Tzu Chi's blessing.

Dr. Chien Jui-Teng, alternatively, makes it a family tradition to visit a care center every Chinese New Year, where he offers good wishes and red envelopes to his elderly patient, Uncle Aji. Dr. Chien has also accompanied a patient from Penghu back home, inspecting his living environment and enlisting local Tzu Chi volunteers to help improve and sustain the patient's rehabilitation.

Mr. Lin Chuanqin, a patient who now lives far from Hualien, took the time to record a video to express his gratitude. 36 years ago, in the second year after Tzu Chi Hospital was founded, he suffered a severe leg fracture in a work accident and was rushed to the emergency room. It was Dr. Chen Ing-Ho who, with unwavering dedication, saved him from the brink of death. Mr. Lin expressed his gratitude to Master Cheng Yen for establishing the Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualien, saying, "Without this hospital, I would have been sentenced to death back then. I thank Director Ing-Ho Chen for using his lifetime of experience to save my humble life. I also appreciate Tzu Chi's volunteers for giving me long-term spiritual comfort. Now, I am married, have a stable home, and



Lin Chuanqin expresses his gratitude via video at the book launch. On the left, a 1988 photo shows Dr. Chen Ing-Ho protecting Lin Chuanqin's fragile skin after amputation by inflating more than a hundred balloons to use as pillows. On the right is Lin Chuanqin in 2015, now a street performer, presents Dr. Chen with a dog balloon as a token of appreciation.



Xiamen resident Chen Tuanzhi thanks "Superintendent Dad" Dr. Chen Ing-Ho for treating her and allowing her to turn her life around. Below is a family photo of Chen Tuanzhi.

all of this is something I could not have imagined or possessed before."

Ms. Chen Tuanzhi, who lives in Xiamen, once suffered from "extreme congenital knee flexion," a condition in which her legs formed into an L-shape from the knee to the calf. Her case, with the added complexity of secondary ankle joint talipes equinovarus, is an extremely rare condition, with only two documented cases worldwide. Seeking treatment in Hualien in 2014, under the care of Superintendent Chen Ing-Ho, she underwent several challenging surgeries that improved her condition. This allowed her to realize her dream of walking. After her recovery, she returned home, found



employment, got married, and now has a five-year-old child who is bright, vibrant and healthy. As she prepares for a follow-up appointment at Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualien at the end of September 2023, she and her husband expressed their gratitude across the sea in a video: "Our family is very happy. Thanks to Master Cheng Yen, Superintendent Dad (Dr. Chen Ing-Ho) and the whole Tzu Chi family and everyone who helped us. This happiness is a gift from all of you."



At the book launch, hospital colleagues and Tzu Chi volunteers gather for a group photo and listen to the detailed accounts of the book's protagonists, highlighting the progress and inheritance of medical skills and ethics within the orthopedic team.