



Company of Tzu Chi Volunteer Parents Is Like a Spiritual Resting Place

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It has been over three years since the outbreak of COVID-19. During this period, healthcare workers have faced immense pressure—not only from the virus itself but also from social rejection, as people feared being indirectly infected by us. Yet, we have remained on the front lines in the hospital, ensuring that patients receive proper care and that nosocomial infections are prevented. Of course, we also experience fatigue. When we do, we are always met with warm care and greetings from Tzu Chi's dedicated volunteers. They prepare delicious and nutritious meals, portioned according to pandemic prevention guidelines, making them easy for us to grab. This strong physical and emotional support provides us with a spiritual resting place, allowing us to face challenges without fear and move forward with determination.

Due to the pandemic, our volunteers had to suspend their activities. Finally, as restrictions eased this year, we began to see volunteers moving about in the Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital Emergency Department again.

The first volunteer to check in was the experienced Sister Bihua. Accompanied by her daughter, she came to the emergency room to observe and understand how volunteers could protect themselves from infection, what help patients might need, and what tasks they could assist with. They took a hands-on approach to understand the scope of volunteer services, and together, we discussed the necessary preventive measures, procedures, and changes in workflow. This preparation ensured that volunteers would be able to serve smoothly when they



returned to the emergency department.

On Monday morning, with a joyful and grateful heart, we welcomed the first batch of volunteers after the pandemic. Led by Sister Bihua, I explained the tasks that needed their assistance, assigning them to appropriate positions based on



gender. Sister Bihua then provided guidance on precautions and reviewed their prior training to help them adapt more quickly to the emergency environment.

I remember Sister Bihua sharing a story about a volunteer brother who was volunteering in the emergency room for the first time. He became nervous and scared when he saw a trauma patient and didn't know how to help. Sister Bihua told him, "We should step aside and not block the medical staff. If the nurses need help, they will ask us." She often humbly says, "We are not here to help others, but to learn." The same can be said for hospital staff. In the fast-paced, high-pressure environment of the emergency room, it's easy to lose patience with patients or their families. Quick and brief communication might come across as rude or arrogant. At such times, volunteers act as a bridge between the medical staff and patients. Seeing volunteers interact with patients and their families with patience and kindness helps to soften our own approach, allowing us to communicate more calmly and listen attentively to patients' needs.

With many patients in the emergency room, IV stands and equipment are often left scattered, creating disorder. Volunteers quietly help clean up and return items to their proper places. When patients or families become frustrated due to long wait





times, volunteers provide comforting support. The presence of volunteers reduces complaints and conflicts, easing the workload of the medical staff and allowing us to focus more on diagnosing the patient and providing appropriate care.

Sister Bihua is genuinely caring and often describes herself as a “busybody.” When she notices a colleague hasn’t had water, she’ll brew a pot of tea. If she finds a patient living alone with no one to assist them, she will take them to the social services department for resources. When a colleague is feeling down due to a family member’s illness, she tells me so I can offer support. Thanks to her “busybody” spirit, I too am inspired to proactively care for and assist both patients and colleagues.

I always refer to the emergency room as “my home.” This home is filled with warmth and laughter. The silent dedication and support of our volunteer fathers and mothers allow us to rely on each other, collaborate, and uphold the emergency department as a true “family.”