



**From the Senior :**

# Pass on to New Nurses without a Generation Gap

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When I was younger, people often told me that nursing was a guaranteed lifetime job. Because of this belief, even though I wasn't very interested in the career, I entered Nursing College. When the "Eight Immortals Dust Explosion" (a park fireworks explosion incident) shocked Taiwan in 2015, I was interning at the Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital. Due to my strong performance, my teacher recommended me to take care of a victim of the explosion. He was a young boy who was depressed due to the severe burns. I had to stay by his side and continuously encourage him and cheer him up. Through such an experience, I discovered that nursing is not such a boring and joyless job. I could find my inner happiness just by staying with my patient and offering help.

My primary interest was in caring for critically ill patients. However, after I graduated from college, I served in a neighborhood hospital where new nurses can only serve in the general wards. The workload in that hospital was very heavy. Normally, a nurse is responsible for eight to ten patients. Even during my first month on the job, I was assigned to serve eight patients. My shift started at six o'clock in the morning. During the day, I would continue to serve medications to my patients or communicate with family members of the patients. This routine would go on all day. And, when the shift is over, then it's time to type all the medical records. All day, the nurse worked like a medication-dispensing machine, with hardly a minute of break. By the time I returned home, it was usually around eight or nine o'clock in the evening. Finally, I quit that job. In 2016, I joined the Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital and served in the Surgical Intensive Care Unit.

## Backing Up the Trainees

In our department, a new nurse should be mentored by a veteran for three months before assuming duty independently. Chen Li-Ling was the second new nurse trained with me. When she first came to the unit, I was taking classes and was extremely busy.

I worked a regular full-time job plus two days of schooling. In addition, I was not very experienced in leading people at that time. So, quite so often, I was emotional toward the trainee. My colleagues thought that I was mean when they heard me yelling at a junior nurse from far away.

At the beginning, I did not know how to train. I remembered that when I first came to the unit, my mentor gave me a flash drive containing all the class notes and PPT files. I added all my handwritten notes to the drive and passed it to Li-Ling and hoped that would help.

Li-Ling is a lively and cheerful young nurse. Whether I praised her for a job well done, or condemned her for a mistake she made, she always smiled and replied with “Yes, senior sister.” Sometimes I was confused, unsure whether her answer was positive or negative. Luckily, her progress was faster than I expected. In less than two months, she was able to take care of two patients on her own. All I needed to do was just give her a light hint on the side. Of course, I would take time to review her performance and ask for feedbacks at the end of the day.

When conditions of the intensive care unit patients improved, they would be transferred to the general ward. During the transition, general ward nurses would question every detail of the patients’ condition. I mentioned the situation to Li-Ling and warned her to be prepared. But during the first two months of her internship, I personally accompanied her to each of the transitions. I would stay by her side and ready to answer any questions that she had difficulty to answer. After two months, she was ready to handle the task by herself.

Every time, after Li-Ling completed an assignment and returned to SICU, I would inquire if everything went on smoothly and were there any questions she could not answer smoothly. She would always answer, “No problem, everything’s OK.” That made me feel relaxed. If she stayed away for more than 20 minutes, I would then call the general ward and provide any necessary help.

### **Let’s Figure Out a Solution**

A few years ago, my elder sister was suffering from cancer. Just before the scheduled operation, she fell into coma. The emergency doctor arranged an extracorporeal membrane oxygenation procedure. At that time, I had no experience of taking care of patients under extracorporeal membrane treatment. However, I had overheard from more experienced nurses discussing the consequences of such treatment. They were, in general, not optimistic about the treatment. That is because



no one can tell the duration of a coma, and to what degree is the brain hypoxia. If the hypoxia prolongs for more than five minutes, there is a high chance that the patient would fall into a vegetative state. The physician in charge called a meeting with our family and the social worker to discuss the risks and understand our perspective. Finally, we decided to remove the device and let my sister leave in peace.

My elder sister's procedure made me realize that during the treatment family members of the patient can involve in the medical team to figure out an acceptable plan that would be beneficial and acceptable to all parties. This discovery would become a power guidance in the later days of my nursing career.

With Li-Ling as my helper, we were assigned to take care of a patient under extracorporeal membrane treatment. He was in his thirties, and it was difficult for his family to accept the incident. That made me think of my elder sister. Therefore, I told Li-Ling to communicate with the social worker and try to understand the opinion of the patient's family. Meanwhile, I proposed that the medical team conduct a meeting with the family members. At the meeting, the doctors explained the pros and cons of the extracorporeal membrane treatment. Realizing the consequences of the treatment, the wife of the patient was convinced to remove the membrane. However, this was the first time Li-Ling was confronted with such a situation, she was confused and did not know what to do. Calmly, I explained to Li-Ling and guided her through the mentally and physically difficult procedure.

After three months of satisfactory performance, Li-Ling completed her internship and started to take care of patients all by herself. One day, to my surprise, our head nurse told me that my younger sister was leaving. I asked, which one of my younger sisters? (Because there were two trainees under me at that time) When the head nurse told me that it was Li-Ling, I could not believe it. Li-Ling looked happy and always eager to learn.

I talked to Li-Ling with full sincerity. I said, "Don't just make the decision in a hurry. Let's figure out what is bothering you and find a way to solve your problem. You made very good progress during the three months of internship. Don't throw it away." She told me that her skin problem kept bothering her, and she needed a break to solve the problem. With the help of our head nurse, we arranged the proper treatment for her skin in the hospital. Li-Ling never mentioned about quitting again.

### **Optimistic and Eager to Help, a Respectable Rookie**

One day, early in the morning, Li-Ling came and said to me that one of her patients behaved unusually. She wanted me to go over and take a quick look at the patient. The



patient had indeed appeared weird, he seemed to be out of his mind, and his vision distracted. But the patient responded to us properly. I told Li-Ling that she had better report to the physician in charge immediately and meanwhile watch the patient closely. Li-Ling followed my advice and watched the patient closely. Nonetheless, the patient's heartbeat stopped in just a few minutes.

Li-Ling was shocked by the sudden turn of events. She could not take the fact and kept blaming herself for the incident. I comforted her and told her that I was besides her throughout the incident. Unexpected situations can happen to any patient especially in ICU. All we can do is try our best. Maybe it was just Li-Ling's fate that she had to confront so many odd cases. Looking from other point of view, we all learned from special and unexpected situations.

Throughout the years, I had the opportunity to help many junior nurses to step into their career. My approach is to stay close with them, talk to them and discuss their problems, and seek solutions with them. Just like the early days my senior nurses taught me. Li-Ling is an easy-going girl. She works very hard, quick in learning, and eager to help. We are all very happy that she assimilated smoothly and quickly. Being her mentor, I can't stop saying loudly, "I am so proud of you, Chen Li-Ling."