



# Act as a Nursing Phoenix on the Rescue Line



**Chou Ming-Yu,  
Wound, Stoma, and Incontinence  
Nurse at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital**

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With high-pitched sirens and flashing red warning lights, emergency medical vehicles race through the streets, saving lives. The passionate Phoenix volunteer “emergency medical rescuers” may not be firefighters, but they ride alongside firefighting personnel in ambulances, rescuing lives around the clock.

Chou Ming-Yu, a wound, stoma, and incontinence nurse at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital and a 2014 graduate of Tzu Chi University’s Nursing Department, loves life. During her university years, she joined the Hualien County Fire Department’s Ziqiang Branch as a volunteer emergency medical technician, fighting to save lives at death’s door. Back in the hospital, she provides delicate and warm care, accompanying stoma patients through their gradual recovery.

“Whether inside or outside the hospital, if it’s something that can help people, just do it.” Carrying the mission of both a volunteer emergency medical technician and a nursing professional, Chou Ming-Yu moves forward steadily on her path of helping others, never tiring of it.

### **Loving Nature, Aspiring to Emergency Care**

Living in Taipei’s Neihu district, young Chou Ming-Yu was a curious child who loved observing plants and trees, even owning a beloved botanical field guide. Her parents worked in advertising and had an open-minded approach to education, encouraging Ming-Yu to experience and try activities or camps that interested her. This subtly cultivated her lively and outgoing personality.

In high school, studying natural sciences, Ming-Yu was also the student council president, balancing club activities and academics while maintaining good grades. When planning her future during her senior year, she initially wanted to study plant pathology. However, reflecting on her more extroverted personality, she realized she might not be happy spending all day in a laboratory. Later, after watching several Japanese medical dramas, she was deeply moved by the heroic scenes of life-saving efforts. “Just like in the shows, where doctors and nurses rush from the hospital to disaster sites for rescue and medical care, I also want to perform emergency medical assistance!” Harboring a dream of saving and helping people, and considering medical school’s high entry barriers, she decided to aim for nursing.

Performing well in entrance exams, Ming-Yu interviewed at three public and private university nursing departments. One was Tzu Chi University. Having grown up in the city, she loved Hualien’s mountain and sea scenery and was deeply impressed by the tranquil campus environment. After careful consideration, she decided to become a freshman in Tzu Chi University’s Nursing Department.



## Joining Phoenix Volunteers, Applying Knowledge to Help Others

At university, Ming-Yu made many new friends and found the nursing curriculum rich. She signed a three-year public scholarship, planning to work at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital after graduation and pursue graduate studies. While her new life was going smoothly, she felt somewhat lost. She had always imagined working in the hospital's emergency or critical care units with opportunities to participate in on-site rescue, but discovered through her nursing courses that Taiwan did not have such a system.

“At the time, I was really struggling because I wanted to perform pre-hospital emergency medical care at accident sites.” Learning that the fire department recruited “Phoenix volunteers” as emergency medical technicians, she seized the opportunity. She first signed up for Tzu Chi University's emergency rescue course, obtained her EMT-1 (Basic Emergency Medical Technician) certification, and officially joined the volunteer ranks. At the Hualien County Fire Department's Ziqiang Branch, Ming-Yu was full of enthusiasm, almost always on standby during her free time. Her classmates joked that she was constantly moving between three points: school, dormitory, and the fire station across from Tzu Chi University.

“Emergency response, emergency response, deploy quickly! Deploy quickly!” Upon receiving urgent notifications, volunteer emergency medical technicians would prepare and deploy with firefighting personnel. Notification details were usually concise, only indicating a car accident or illness and the incident location. Sitting in the speeding ambulance felt somewhat nerve-wracking, as one could not predict the situation awaiting them.



Asked about her first deployment, Ming-Yu said, “I was constantly thinking about what to do, what emergency procedures and methods to execute, so I would forget the scene itself and wouldn’t feel afraid or nervous.”

Recalling rescue scenes, she has performed CPR for cardiac arrest patients from car accidents, helped a pregnant woman giving birth in a bathtub, rescued newborns from water, aided civilians contemplating suicide, and even encountered carbonized bodies. Through various accident scenes, she seemed to have witnessed the breadth of human life and the unpredictability of existence. In life-saving moments, Ming-Yu discovered how significantly nursing expertise could be applied in emergency rescue.

“Initially, when learning emergency rescue techniques, all skills were memorized mechanically. But as I learned nursing and incorporated theoretical knowledge, I understood why we ask patients certain disease-related questions and why we perform specific assessments. This allows us to truly address the patient’s actual condition or problem.”

### **Creating a Society for Self-Help and Altruism, the Joy of Saving Lives**

Committed to serving society through emergency medical volunteer work, Ming-Yu’s campus life was equally fulfilling. She applied her first aid experience by founding the “Double Love Emergency Care Club” to promote basic rescue techniques on campus: CPR, AED (Automated External Defibrillator), fracture stabilization, and bleeding control methods. The club also set up medical stations during school sports meets and swimming competitions, and Ming-Yu often





volunteered at the health center during her free time, helping teachers and students with wound treatment and bandaging.

Because of her love for nature and hiking, Ming-Yu co-founded the Tzu Chi University Mountaineering Club with medical student Ng Jue-Chuan (now a resident doctor in the emergency department at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital). This group of like-minded friends trained to climb hundred-peak mountains while promoting mountain safety and mutual assistance. “As founding members, we designed mountain accident and emergency reporting procedures and even invited Dr. Chen Chih-Chiang from family medicine to teach mountain medicine courses.” She laughingly noted that while the Double Love Emergency Care Club disbanded after three years due to professional issues, the mountaineering club continues to operate, and she’s grateful to junior students for maintaining it.

During her internship, Ming-Yu learned obstetrics at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital and psychiatry at Hualien Mennonite Hospital, with other departments completed at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. Her days were filled with hospital service and her nights with fire station duty. One night, the squadron received a call about a woman who had collapsed at home, unresponsive to her family’s calls. Rescue personnel found her without breathing or pulse, immediately performing CPR and rushing her to Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital’s emergency department, where doctors discovered a brain aneurysm and began rescue efforts.



The rescue mission seemed to conclude. Surprisingly, a few days later, Ming-Yu encountered the patient during her surgical ward internship. “I saw a familiar patient and carefully reviewed her admission notes, which detailed her OHCA (Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest) and subsequent surgery...” She was deeply moved to witness the patient’s transformation from having no vital signs to recovering health. The collaboration between medical and emergency personnel in saving lives at the brink of death became

her motivation for being a nurse and emergency medical volunteer. Later, the patient's daughter recognized Ming-Yu as the volunteer who had rescued her mother that day and specially thanked her.

Accident scenes might be dark and unclean, and performing CPR doesn't allow for preliminary ground cleaning. In traffic accidents, rescuers must work on the road, constantly alert and watching their surroundings while ensuring their own safety. Initially, Ming-Yu's parents were

concerned about the potential dangers of being an emergency medical volunteer. However, they didn't restrict her, understanding that she was doing something correct and meaningful.



### **Accumulating Care Experience, Finding Interest Through Service**

After graduating from Tzu Chi University, Chou Ming-Yu began working in Ward 7 at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. She laughingly admits she was initially quite disappointed, as she had practical experience as an emergency medical volunteer and desperately wanted to work in the emergency or critical care unit. Mustering her courage, she wrote to Deputy Director Chung Hui-Chun (now Nursing Department Director) to inquire about a potential unit transfer. "Director Chung suggested I first accumulate ward experience before rotating, and I also asked about the possibility of transferring to the Wound, Stoma, and Incontinence Center."

During her university years, Ming-Yu had already planned her career path: if working in a critical care unit, she would become a specialist nurse; if in a general ward, she wanted to be a wound, stoma, and incontinence nurse. After consulting senior wound, stoma, and incontinence nurse Hsu Mei-Yu at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, she was advised to first gain three years of clinical experience and obtain an N2 or higher qualification before specializing. She was also recommended to join the Taiwan Wound, Stoma, and Incontinence Nursing Association if truly interested. "I was essentially shot down, haha," she said, and obediently reported to Ward 7.



Perhaps by divine arrangement, Ward 7 treated general surgery and urology patients, frequently admitting stoma patients. Ming-Yu carefully learned stoma nursing by observing nurses changing patients' dressings. She also joined the Wound, Stoma, and Incontinence Nursing Association, absorbing professional knowledge through their courses and deepening her understanding of stoma nursing.

After nearly two years in Ward 7, the Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital Wound, Stoma, and Incontinence Center happened to need staff. Ming-Yu was grateful that Director Chung remembered her as the junior who wanted to become a stoma nurse. After evaluation and discussion between the Nursing Department and the Wound, Stoma, and Incontinence Center, she successfully transferred to her desired department, learning in the field she had long aspired to.



### **Transforming Stoma and Wound Care Domain - Healing Wounds and Hearts**

Chou Ming-Yu first learned stoma care from nurse Hsu Hsiao-Hui, becoming independent after a year, then learning wound care from nurse Hsu Mei-Yu. Because stoma and wound care are specialized services, if substantial dressing changes are performed, additional service and medical material fees are required, not included in hospital expenses. When Ming-Yu first independently changed dressings, she felt

immense pressure, worried about incorrectly applying bags or making procedural errors that might increase patient expenses. She thanked her senior colleagues for their strong support: “When I first became independent, I would practice with my senior colleague before going to the ward to change dressings. If I encountered difficult stomas that were prone to leakage or had excessive drainage, I would discuss with senior Hsu Hsiao-Hui. If truly unable to manage, I would bring my senior colleague to observe her dressing change techniques and absorb her experience, so I would better understand how to handle similar stomas next time.”

Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital is the only medical institution in eastern Taiwan with a dedicated stoma and wound care outpatient clinic. Patients are typically referred after assessment by doctors or specialized nurses. For colorectal or surgical diseases requiring stomas, pre-surgical consultations are made to help stoma nurses assess and determine appropriate stoma placement. Ming-Yu explains: “We first check the patient’s abdominal position while standing, sitting, and lying down, ensuring the stoma is visible and touchable for self-care. We also examine the skin for wrinkles, scars, or fatty accumulations that might create depressions, preventing future care difficulties.” If patients discover post-surgical stoma restrictions or care challenges, doctors will issue medical orders in the system, referring them to stoma nurses for professional care.

While serving stoma patients, Ming-Yu has observed numerous human stories. “When I see a wound, I consider multiple treatment options, though not all suitable for every patient. For instance, a specific dressing might work for a particular wound, but patient economic considerations matter. If they’ve already sought social worker assistance, we can’t burden them with expensive self-paid medical materials. I might use national health insurance ointments with additional supplementary treatments. We assess patients’ socioeconomic status, family members’ dressing change cooperation, and the patient’s individual condition.”

Beyond rational thinking, stoma nurses also require emotional sensitivity. “Some terminal patients develop skin deterioration that resembles pressure injuries but aren’t actually such.” When patients approach end-of-life, applying dressings won’t improve their condition, yet families’ desire providing the most comprehensive treatment. Stoma nurses assist in care, fulfilling families’ good intentions and expectations.

Helping patients alleviate wound pain, eliminate odors, manage stomas, prevent skin damage, and care for incontinence-related skin conditions... Stoma, wound, and incontinence nurses provide services that seem simple yet incredibly warm, using gentle hands to comfort patients’ suffering and accompanying them with love until wounds heal.



## **Meticulous Guidance as a Support Force - DMAT Advancing into Disaster Areas**

This is Chou Ming-Yu's sixth year in clinical nursing, but she has nearly ten years of experience as a volunteer emergency medical responder. Discussing her nursing insights, she says, "It seems like my stoma care and emergency rescue are completely unrelated, but there are many professional avenues to develop." Just as in her emergency response experience, nursing is like a solid foundation. Ming-Yu encourages nursing juniors to first understand their personality and goals, choose their desired department, and if they don't like it, switch tracks, gradually discovering interests or specialties to develop their most "proficient" professional area.

Ming-Yu had briefly supervised nursing interns in Ward 7, stating, "I first explain the workstation system because familiarity with the system helps understand work processes. When you explain clearly, interns become your support, understanding how to help you." The same meticulous guidance applies to stoma care. When Ming-Yu changes dressings in the ward, she asks ward nurses to assist, providing detailed

explanations so ward colleagues understand each dressing change step and potential wound progression, collaboratively helping patients improve and reducing error rates.

"My wound care training continues because wound types are increasingly diverse and complex. Stoma care requires more time, involving patient and family education on dressing changes. Wounds require frequent tracking, with patient numbers accumulating - about 40-50 patient consultations monthly, continuing until wound healing, discharge, or patient passing." Wounds show observable changes, improving daily; stomas require longer education. Ming-Yu treats patients and families like students, gradually teaching complete wound care techniques. Some family members learn quickly, even guiding new nurses in dressing changes. These different achievements bring her immense satisfaction. She says, "Seeing a 90-year-old grandfather change his stoma independently is truly amazing!"





**In the Hualien earthquake on April 3, 2024, Chou Ming-Yu (second from right) served as a member of the Hualien Disaster Medical Team's advance group, dispatched to support the Uranus Mass Casualty Joint Rescue Station. Fourth from left is Dr. Lai Pei-Fang from the Emergency Department of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital.**

Rewinding to April 3, 2024, before the earthquake, Ming-Yu was preparing to work at the stoma center on the fifth floor of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital's collaborative building when suddenly the ground shook violently. She saw cabinets nearly toppling and quickly took shelter under a desk. After emerging, she saw the office in disarray, fortunately with everyone safe. She thought: This earthquake might cause significant damage.

Chou Ming-Yu is a member of Hualien's Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT). After the earthquake, she consulted the nursing department and rushed to the assembly point. "Our advance team included Dr. Lai Pei-Fang from the emergency department, myself as a nurse, and members from Hualien Military Hospital, Hualien County Health Bureau, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare's Eastern Emergency Medical Response Center." The advance team reached the Tianwangxing Building joint rescue station within an hour. She encountered Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital's night shift emergency nursing head Tu Ping-Hsu, noting, "Big Brother Tu is with the special search medical team, we're the Hualien Disaster Medical Assistance Team - different teams but working towards the same goal." She and her team quickly divided tasks, assessing



disaster area conditions, inventorying resources, and coordinating with rescue teams to provide emergency medical treatment for rescued patients.

### **Advanced Specialist Course - Creating a New Career Direction**

Ming-Yu planned to pursue graduate studies during her undergraduate years, realizing this goal last year (2023). She is currently studying in the Family Nurse Practitioner track at Tzu Chi University's Nursing Graduate School, participating in the Ministry of Health and Welfare's "Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP)" faculty cultivation plan as a third-batch public scholarship student.

The curriculum focuses beyond general nursing knowledge, emphasizing "assessment." Ming-Yu shares, "Nurses conduct physical assessments, but FNP courses train you to think about diagnoses and plan patient treatment directions after the assessment - like a comprehensive thinking training." She was deeply impressed by nursing school teacher Hsieh Mei-Lin's "Advanced Health Assessment and Experiments" course. FNPs take the same exam as NPs, including the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). Teacher Hsieh used Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital's teaching facilities, teaching with licensing exam standards to help them understand exam approaches and strengthen their capabilities.

"This is a new professional category with many development opportunities, just like nursing." In June, the first batch of family nurse practitioners will take their exam, and Ming-Yu eagerly anticipates hearing seniors' future career directions.

### **Furry Companions for Stress Relief - Courageously Moving Forward**

Discussing her Hualien home, Ming-Yu's husband is a firefighter serving in the Ji'an Special Search Squad. They met at the fire station and have been married for nearly three years. Their family includes an important member: a black dog named Siri. "A few months into our relationship, five puppies were abandoned at Tzu Chi University's car shed. The university's Huasheng Society temporarily housed them for adoption. Since I always wanted a black dog, I asked my husband if we could adopt, and he agreed."

Grown Siri is steady and occasionally "works" at the special search squad. The Hualien County Fire Department's search dogs Hero, Fancy, and Wilson, who performed heroically in the 0403 Hualien earthquake rescue, are Siri's good friends.

Her student-era mountain hiking interest continues. Ming-Yu and her husband take Siri to riverside play or hiking trails. "These outdoor activities are perfect in Hualien! My



dog loves water, swimming for one to two hours. Taking him to play is my best stress relief.” Dog’s water playtime is her relaxation, enjoying quiet moments in areas with poor signal.

Regarding future prospects, with no official family nurse practitioner positions yet with some time before graduate school graduation, she’s taking a wait-and-see approach. As family nurse practitioners are a more open category compared to hospital specialists, she hopes to potentially follow the American model of independent practice, connecting hospitals and communities to provide home stoma care. “American nurse practitioners collaborate with doctors, prescribing for community patients or conducting physical assessments, referring to major hospitals when necessary.”

Currently, she aims to obtain her family nurse practitioner license, accumulate experience at the stoma center, help more patients, and continue her volunteer emergency medical service.

Counting her growth experiences, Ming-Yu feels grateful for her relatively smooth life journey. She didn’t choose an easy path but focused on the right goals, moving forward courageously. For her, every connection is the best arrangement. Ming-Yu protects life in her own way, continuously improving to illuminate others’ paths, wishing her continued vibrant and confident nursing life.