

4 Undergraduate Nursing Students' Journey to Find Secrets of Taiwanese Hospice

韓國慶尚大學護理系學生安寧參訪

◎文 / Suyoung PARK



We are now witnessing rapid growth in medical technology. It even conveys the false image that there is no defeat over disease. However, as we are mortal and as the current medical technology is yet imperfect, there has to be a profound

consideration of the end of life care. As hospice is one area of end-stage care, we got interested in it. To find answers to improve hospice care in Korea, we applied for our university's funding program, 'Global Pioneering Program', which required us to set the research topic and the visiting nation. The destination had to be Taiwan because it is known to have no.1 hospice care in Asia and it shares a more easily relatable culture.

On January 22nd, we were provided a hospital tour of National Cheng Kung University Hospital (NCKUH), especially the hospice ward. The secretary, Ms. 張喬青 explained the history of NCKUH and its remarkable achievements. When we arrived at the hospice ward, Dr. 邱威鑫 welcomed us. With the help of translation provided by the Reverend



Father Maximilien Marie (畢度神父) and 姜炅兌 修士 from the Congregation of Saint John Apostle, we had a look around the hospice ward.

Dr. 邱威鑫 explained the procedure of planning patient's hospice care and various medical devices for relieving patient's pain. All of the facilities were carefully provided. A praying room, room for the family consultation and even the fish tank had its purpose; giving the patient a chance to think about life. We saw many other facilities as we followed Dr. 邱威鑫 guide and there are three things I realized.

Firstly, I could see the devotion and passion of donors and volunteers toward hospice. On one wall there were trees decorated with many golden leaf plates of different sizes. It had a donor's name on it. I could feel the donor's wishes to help the growth of hospice care. Also, on one side of the hallway, there were photos of current volunteers. It was impressive that the volunteers were required to undergo a certain period of education, placement, and even qualification tests. It was inspiring to hear that many volunteers devoted their lives to helping others even in their post-retirement years. I think these donors and volunteers are one of the key factors of advanced hospice care in Taiwan.

Secondly, it was surprising to learn that the ratio of nurse to bed is 1 to 1 in hospice ward. Such a high ratio would be a huge help to the patient. It would allow for the patient to easily talk about one's pain and thoughts



because they don't have to worry about whom to tell. Also, the nurse would learn more about the patient and thus give more patient-centered care. Later on, with Prof. 賴維淑, we discovered that this was actually required by the law. I believe this is what Korea should improve upon.

Lastly, I could see that the hospice care was not just about the patient but also the family. During our tour, we saw a room for the family. It was interesting to see a dollhouse there. Dr. 邱威鑫 explained that the psychologists and medical staffs would engage in role play to see how the patient's child was handling the concept of death. And also, to get an idea of the role within the family. He

said that this kind of information would be considered when giving care to the patient. Another thing that is very remarkable was the use of massaging bathtub. Dr. 邱威鑫 said that a patient and his/her child would have an intimate time and an opportunity to gain mutual understanding.

After meeting Dr. 邱威鑫, we met Prof. 賴維淑 and one of her master's students, 劉梨榛 who is currently studying hospice care. After receiving a warm welcome, we watched a short video about the hospice ward in NCKUH. We established a clear understanding of teamwork and sincerity of hospice care in this university hospital.

Then, Prof. 賴維淑 and the master's student, 劉梨榛 enthusiastically shared their ideas of Taiwanese hospice care. One thing that they both stressed was combining hospice care to all medical field. Prof. 賴維淑 suggested all medical staffs regardless of their department to have

the ability to provide hospice care to the patient. She continued with the example of a pediatric hospice patient. Because it is easier for the existing pediatric care team to understand the child patient, and also because the child has accumulated past relationship with them, she said that hospice care provided by the pediatric team would be of more help to the patient. Therefore, she proposed hospice care to be provided in every ward rather than in a separate hospice ward. Because we simply thought Taiwan's relatively abundant number of hospice ward as the key aspect of flourishing Taiwanese hospice care, we found this proposal very impressive.

With this viewpoint, she stressed the importance of universities' role in training their future medical professionals to understand the concept of hospice care. So hearing that this university encourages undergraduate nursing students to

gain experiences related to hospice care, we could know how much the hospice care is emphasized even in an early educational period.

Our journey to finding the secret of hospice care was worth all the time and effort. I think the secret, after all, is the keen interest. Without people's attention, close cooperation between the government, hospitals, NGOs, and universities would not have happened. Volunteers wouldn't have helped and donors wouldn't have contributed. And I believe this passion over hospice care is what led Ms. 張喬青, Dr. 邱威鑫, 畢度神父, 姜炅兌 修士, Prof. 賴維淑, and 劉梨榛 to spare their time and effort to let us learn more about hospice care. I would like to thank all the people who have helped us directly or indirectly. We learned so much from this journey and I hope this experience would someday act as momentum for bringing out the changes.