

Young Cancer Patient Donates His Organs Before His Passing

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Thursday, 31 May 2012 16:12



[The Real Life Stories]

I knew Mr. Liao soon after the Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital opened. He was a patient in the Hematology and Oncology unit; he was being assessed for chemotherapy after being transferred here from another hospital. To confirm the diagnosis, I carried out a biopsy on the condition of his lung tumor. As soon as I saw the report, I said to myself ‘Ah, this is it’. I knew at once that he did not have much time left.

He had the worst type of lung tumors, often found in young people -- and he was only twenty-seven years old. He was very unfortunate. By the time he came to our hospital, the tumors had already spread all over his lungs.

Every time I saw Mr. Liao, he was in the hospital for chemotherapy, sometimes in the lobby and sometimes in the clinical department; his mother was always by his side. I did not pay much attention on him, until I saw him waiting for his mother in the lobby and noticed he had lost all his hair – so different from the young man I had seen before. I knew he did not have much time left. Then I gave him two books of Jing Si Aphorisms to start a relationship with him. After that, every time I saw him in the hospital, even from a distance, we would greet each other.

Once I saw him lying in the emergency room where he had been after spitting blood. His tumors had already metastasized and affected the upper respiratory tract. I talked with him; he told me that, when he went to sleep every night, he did not know if he would wake up the next morning. There was nothing I could say! His mother was always by his side, talking with him; but this time her eyes were full of tears. During the many times I saw him over three years, I knew death was stalking him like a shadow, but I never thought that would be the last time I saw him.

In November 2011, when Dharma Master Cheng Yen came to the hospital to unveil a monument for organ donors, I suddenly noticed his name carved on it. It felt as if I was seeing him again. Although many of his organs could not be donated because of the malignant tumors, he donated his cornea.

Now, every time I pass the monument and see his name, I am touched. I know how, during the three years of chemotherapy, the doctors strove to extend his life – and succeeded for several years. In every hospital, patients are passing away all the time. I am grateful to have this hospital as a community for spiritual cultivation; it allows us constantly to reflect on ourselves and understand karmic relationships.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen says:

The natural cycle of human life -- “birth, ageing, illness and death” can all be seen in a hospital. It is a spiritual community, which inspires people to realise the impermanence in life and motivates people to cultivate themselves.

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(Extracted from the morning volunteers' assembly on February 28, 2012)