

Patients, Doctors Celebrate Tzu Chi Hospital's Parkinson Treatment Center

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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Doctors, nurses, patients and their families came together at Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualien in east Taiwan to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its pioneering center for the treatment of Parkinson's disease. Over the past 10 years, it has helped more than 860 people, saving the lives of some and enabling others who were wheelchair-bound to walk again and return to work. The center has received foreign recognition for its treatment.

A degenerative disease of the central nervous system, the disease is named after James Parkinson, the British doctor who published the first detailed description in 1817. It is most common in the elderly, with most cases occurring after the age of 50, and places a heavy burden on the care-giver, usually a spouse or close relative.

This year marked the 25th anniversary of the Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital and the 10th of its Parkinson's Treatment Centre, which has treated over 860 patients since it was established. Of them, more than 130 received a form of surgery known as Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS), accounting for over 30 per cent of the patients in Taiwan who have received such treatment. The hospital organized a large gathering: staff, patients and their families came together to celebrate the work of the center and give thanks for the treatment they have received. Over 90 per cent of them were able to walk into the gathering unaided; it was hard to imagine that they had the disease.



Among them was Shih Ming-sheng, 61, from Kaohsiung. Hearing his quick wit and good sense of humor, no-one would imagine that he was a Parkinson's sufferer. It was in 2006 that, on the advice of his wife, he had the DBS operation. "At that time, the disease was very serious," he said. "I felt that I had no hope. I thought to myself that the best I could do was retire and live the rest of my life quietly. I did not imagine that Dr. Chen Hsin-yuan, of the hospital's neurosurgery department, would say: 'No, you can go back to work!' After the operation, I felt as good as before the illness. I could not only go back to work but also continue my first love, playing golf. Dr. Chen gave me a new life after Parkinson's disease!" Dr. Chen said that, currently, there was no complete cure: "what we do is to improve the symptoms, through drugs or an operation. This requires the full co-operation of the patient and his family. So we must give thanks to everyone – the patients, their families and all the medical staff."

International recognition

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