

## TIMA Dentists Provide Free Care to 'Sleeping Angels' in Taiwan

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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Aided by 12 volunteers, two dentists of the [Tzu Chi International Medical Association](#) (TIMA) provided a free clinic in central Taiwan to a dozen 'sleeping angels' – patients who are in a permanent vegetative state. A total of 29 live in the Miaoli branch of the Genesis Social Welfare Foundation, the youngest of them is 13 years old. Most are victims of traffic accidents. Posted on the wall are these words: "there are angels whose lives are not finished yet but who are disconnected with the world outside. They are in a deep sleep."

The two dentists, Dr Lee Yi-bon and Dr Huang Xiang-xun, conducted the free clinic on July 17, accompanied by 12 volunteers from Miaoli and central Taiwan. For Dr Lee, it was the third free clinic there since 2008. It was a very hot summer day. The two doctors and the volunteers bowed devoutly before a statue of the Buddha and put on facial masks and gloves. Dr Lee showed the volunteers how to prepare the dental cleaning equipment and how it works and assigned jobs to them. "After you have used the gloves, you should dispose of them and put on new ones. This will provide the safest and most comfortable way to clean the teeth."



Dr Lee began with a 60-year-old grandfather, skillfully fitting a red prop in his mouth. "Grandpa, do not be nervous and please open your mouth wider," he said. While he was fitting it, he was talking to him: "Grandpa, we are Tzu Chi volunteers who are helping you to floss your teeth. Please relax and do not be nervous ... Does it hurt? I will be gentle in cleaning your teeth." It was a first time for the old man. During the treatment, he kept blinking his eyes and showing his pain through his facial expression. "Please do not turn your head. It is almost done ... Excellent, Grandpa." For their part, the volunteers continued to encourage him throughout the process. After the hour that it took, Dr Lee was covered with sweat. He both scrubbed the teeth and cleaned out three huge dental calculi. "We have finished now. Thank you for your co-operation; we appreciate it," the doctor said. He held the hands of the old man to thank him.

Dr Lee and Dr Huang repeated the process with many patients. While his hands were busy cleaning their teeth, Dr Lee continued to reassure them: "don't worry. We are here to help you floss your teeth. Scaling may cause some sensitivity but you will feel more comfortable after it." Dr Lee did not know which language each patient was more comfortable in, so he asked them to help him: "If it is Taiwanese, please blink once. If it is Mandarin, please blink twice and Hakka three times." In response, one patient blinked twice. He responded: "Excellent! You didn't move a bit when I scaled your teeth." Sometimes the volunteers could not understand the response of a patient who burst into tears – was he feeling pain or moved by the intimate service? What they had written on their beds was: "Although I can't talk, I still thank you for your help."

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