

Taiwan Hospital Chief Receives Special Present

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[The Real Life Stories]

The superintendent of one of Tzu Chi's hospitals in Taiwan received a special gift from an elderly patient who suffers from arthritis -- a bag of red beans from her home town. For Dr Lai Ning-sheng, who heads the Dalin hospital in the southwest of the island, it was the most precious present of the year.

He explained the remarkable story behind the gift at the volunteers' morning assembly on January 17 this year.

"The patient, a grandmother, suffers from rheumatoid arthritis, which I diagnosed six years ago. Her condition was very serious. That day, her husband pushed her in a wheelchair into the examination room. I looked at her and realized that traditional treatment would not help. She must receive a special treatment. It would be effective – but was very expensive, at more than NT\$200,000 for six months. I realized that she would not be able to afford such a large amount; but I was afraid that, if I told her the truth, she would be very worried. So I told her: 'I will apply to the Bureau of National Health Insurance for a subsidy for her.' In fact, I knew that she did not meet its criteria. What should we do?

"Friends of mine and I in Chiayi county decided to provide the money ourselves. When Grandma came for her next appointment, I told that the application had been approved: 'we can begin the treatment now,' I said. The treatment was effective and, by the end, she could walk on her own without a wheelchair."

That was six years ago. A short time ago, Dr Lai saw Grandmother return to the examination room one afternoon carrying a bag of red beans. She and her husband live in Wandan, a town in Pingtung on the southern tip of Taiwan, famous for its high-quality red beans.



" 'Grandma, why are you here?' I asked. 'Are you not feeling well?' 'No,' she said. 'I came to give you these red beans.' I was surprised and said: 'your arms are deformed. Why do you still go on planting red beans?' Her husband cut into the conversation and said he had told her not to do it but that she kept on planting. 'Since last October, she has been saying that she wants to grow red beans for Dr Lai,' he said. October is the planting season; farmers pick up pods and wait for them to dry for seven to ten days before harvesting them by hand. I did not imagine that the love I showed a patient six years ago would be returned in this way. When I received the bag of red beans, it was the most precious gift I received this year.

"I have many friends who are outstanding in the medical field. During conversations with them, I felt that something was missing in their lives. Now I know what it is. They are missing the

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opportunity to show compassion and grow in wisdom. So my wish for this new year is to lead my friends, who are excellent in their field, into this world of compassion.”

Dharma Master Cheng Yen says:

“I am grateful for Dr. Lai's warm and touching story. After your contribution to and help for the old Grandma with her deformed arms, she tried to give something back with a sincere heart. It was a priceless bag of red beans that she had grown despite her difficult situation. How rare to see such a sincere heart! Especially after you paid so much of her medical bill but still told her that it was paid by the insurance, to let her mind be at ease and receive treatment. You contributed without asking for anything in return. This was a beautiful interaction. 'Beauty' is the only word to describe it -- the beauty of giving and of a sincere heart.”

By Doctor Lai Ning-sheng, superintendent of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital

Edited by Chen Wan-chen

Extracted from the Volunteers' Morning Assembly on January 17, 2012.