



The opening of the [Xindian Tzu Chi Hospital](#) * signifies the beginning of both new hope and new responsibilities. "Guarding Health, Life, and Love," the motto inscribed on a stone slab at the entrance to the hospital, will serve as a constant reminder to the medical team and Tzu Chi volunteers to provide high-quality care and treatment. The staff and volunteers must devote themselves to the physical and spiritual well-being of the patients, help improve doctor-patient relationships, and enhance patients' quality of life. Their continuing goal is to improve the quality of medical care available to the patients they serve.



The first in-patient

One night in the orthopedics ward, Kao Wang Ho had trouble falling asleep. The 70-year-old matron was scheduled for surgery the following day, and thinking about it made her uneasy. She rang her bell throughout the night to summon nurses to her side for companionship.

Dr. Tseng Hsiao-tsu was on call that night. He knew that all the nurses were quite busy, and he decided to come to the ward to keep Kao company. Aware of her anxiety about the upcoming surgery, he spent the night on the bed next to Kao's. They chatted and he joked lightly with her to put her mind at ease. Soon, Kao fell asleep peacefully.

When Kao woke up in the morning, she was in good spirits. A hospital volunteer asked, "Did they take good care of you?" "Yes" Kao replied, "The doctors and nurses have all been very nice to me. I have no worries."

Two weeks earlier, Kao had fallen and fractured her right hip joint. When she went to seek treatment, her doctor informed her that her hip required surgery. Fearing the risks and uncertainties of a major operation, she hesitated. "I kept telling my family I didn't want the surgery. I couldn't conquer my fear even when my brother-in-law assured me that I shouldn't worry as the anesthetics would prevent any pain."



Kao's daughter, Ya-hui, said that their home was very close to the Xindian hospital. Every time she left the house, she could see the hospital nearby. When the hospital opened, she decided to take her mother in for an examination.

"I have a good impression of Tzu Chi because whenever major catastrophes strike, its volunteers can always be seen rendering assistance in the disaster areas. I believe that a hospital founded by Tzu Chi will give top priority to the interest and well-being of its patients."

After a series of tests--a blood test, an x-ray, an electrocardiogram, and an ultrasonic examination--doctors at the Xindian hospital decided that although Kao was afflicted with diabetes and had a slightly elevated blood sugar level, it was safe for her to undergo surgery. With the medical issues resolved, all that needed to be done was to ease Kao's mind and relieve her anxiety.

"Dr. Tseng spent the entire night with me," Kao told the volunteer who came to see her. "He listened patiently while I poured out my worries. I was so touched by his care and dedication." Then she turned her head to face Dr. Tseng and said to him, "I have complete trust in you. I know you will do an excellent job."

"I'll definitely do my very best," Tseng reassured her. This would be the very first operation in the orthopedics department. To ensure that everything would run smoothly, Tseng double-checked the equipment in the operating room. He scheduled the operation for Kao only after he made sure each device would work perfectly.

At 4:30 p.m. on May 9, Kao underwent her surgery, which lasted one and a half hours. Her operation was a success. Although the wound from the operation was still causing her pain, her heart was full of joy.



The first surgery

For seven days before the Xindian Tzu Chi Hospital formally opened on May 8, it provided free medical treatment as a way of giving back to the surrounding community. When Lu Ken-tien offered to serve as a Tzu Chi volunteer at the free clinic, he never expected to be the first patient to undergo surgery at the hospital.

After serving as a volunteer for two days, Lu began to feel ill. A day of rest at home did not relieve him of his abdominal pains. In fact, the pain worsened, and he checked into the emergency department of a hospital near his home.

The doctor told him he might be suffering from appendicitis and asked him to stay in the hospital so that his condition could be easily monitored. Because the Xindian Hospital was opening the next day, Lu thought to himself, "It would be a pity if I couldn't take part in the opening ceremony. If I need an operation, why not receive it in the Xindian Hospital?"

On the morning of May 8, Lu checked into the emergency room of the Xindian hospital. A volunteer who knew him joked, "This can't be a coincidence--you just want to test our equipment!"

After Lu underwent all the necessary examinations, doctors confirmed that he had appendicitis and scheduled an operation. Before the operation, Lu's anesthesiologist came to his side and

explained, "After we go into the operating room, the medicine in your drip will help you fall asleep. When you wake up, you may experience nausea and dizziness. But don't worry, these are normal symptoms and we'll take care of you."

As part of standard pre-surgical procedure, doctors always explain how the anesthesia will be administered and any complications that might arise in order to help patients understand what will be happening and reduce their level of anxiety. Li Chun-yi, head of the anesthesia department, said, "We work with each patient closely to assess the risk of complications and to choose the best anesthetic method accordingly."

The operation, performed by Dr. Wu Chao-chin, lasted 40 minutes. After the surgery, Wu visited Lu in his ward.

"Does the wound still hurt?"

"Not really," Lu answered with a smile.



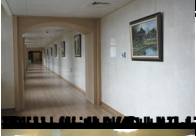
"You have quite an endurance for pain!" responded Dr. Wu. "Your appendix was perforated and you had a white blood cell count of over 11,000, and yet you said you didn't feel any pain." Wu explained further that it would have been better to perform the operation earlier. Fortunately, the hole in Lu's appendix was covered by the small intestines and only caused local peritonitis.

Wu showed some pictures taken during the operation to Lu and his family. "This is a laparoscope. It has a very small lens at one end that enables one to see clearly. During an operation, the surgeon only needs to make three small incisions, no more than one centimeter wide, in the abdomen to allow for the passage of a laparoscope and other instruments to remove the appendix."

Wu said that a small catheter was still connected to an incision in Lu's abdomen. It would be removed three days later if everything went well. "We must be cautious not to infect the wound. Later in the day you may drink some water. If you have no problems drinking water, then you can have milk."

Wu said that if the traditional surgical method had been adopted, the wound caused by the operation would be as wide as five to six centimeters and it would take the patient longer to recover. "There are great advantages to laparoscopic surgery over traditional surgery."

The next day, Lu, accompanied by his wife, moved about outside his ward. "The union of technology and humane care--I can feel it here," he said.



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