

Hospital Volunteer in Taiwan

NGO: The Buddhist Tzu Chi Charity Foundation

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LAIDLAW
SCHOLARS

IMPERIAL

Why the Buddhist Tzu-Chi Charity Foundation?

Tzu-Chi is a Taiwanese international NGO with four major missions: charity, medical, education, and humanistic culture.

Because I wanted to have my LiA project relate to my future career, I searched for NGOs that deliver medical-related services and found a group of Taiwanese university students delivering medical services to countryside. I emailed the group and asked if I could join them, but because training is required and there is no training session scheduled during my proposed time, I could not join the team as a student volunteer. However, as I realised that the group is affiliated to the Tzu-Chi Foundation, I then asked if I could work on something else in the Tzu-Chi Hospital, hoping that I can still participate in delivering medical services to the countryside by being a hospital volunteer.

Project Description

During my LiA project, I worked under the Department of Humanities in the Taipei Tzu-Chi Hospital. My main goal in terms of the good for the community is to foster the connection among medical staff, between the hospital and the local community, and between the Tzu-Chi Foundation and the global community. In terms of my personal goals, I hope to gain some medical-related experiences and interact with medical staff and patients, which I believe would be helpful for my professional career.

Experience / Leadership learning

Elderly care centre

If there are no special events in the hospital, I usually go to the elderly care centre next to the hospital building to assist running day care classes. My tasks include measuring blood pressure, body temperature, and body indices; distributing snacks and materials for recreational classes; assisting with running exercise and sign language sessions; and preparing lunch.



Translator for international visitors

Occasionally, there will be guests from other countries visiting the Tzu-Chi Foundation who want to learn more about how Tzu-Chi works on charity, education, medicine, or environmental protection. During my LiA period, there were three groups of international visitors.

The first group is from an elementary school in California, who visit Taiwan for a sister school contract with Tzu-Chi founded elementary school. The second visitor was a Scottish urologist who was there for professional networking and asking for funding for the charity he runs. During their visit, we gave them a tour of the hospital. The last group I met was the ambassador and college students from the Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis who are currently living in Taiwan. We took them to Tzu-Chi's recycling centre in the Tianmu Baseball Stadium to learn about how recycling is done in Taiwan and to have a tour around the stadium.



Help organising events / services within the hospital

The Department of Humanities runs various events within the hospital for bonding among staff, new employee orientation, lending children's books for staff's children, fund-raising for the Myanmar earthquake, organising monthly meet-up of families who receive financial aid from the foundation.

Because the person I was in touch with works in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit and is a committee member of the Tzu-Chi Collegiate Association, I also helped designing poster for a book-sharing event and created a video for the annual newborn babies reunion.



Patient care

Our department also visit inpatients and give them gifts, wishing them for early recovery. When I visited the ward, I was lucky enough to see a gentleman doing peripheral blood stem cell (PBSC) donation. Encouraged by him, I decided to take my blood sample to have my HLA sequence added to the donor database.

I was also lucky enough to take part in the medical delivery service to Ping-xi, an area with limited medical resources. I work alongside Dr. Cheng, the vice superintendent, to visit elders and take care of their health.



Impacts and their sustainability

The relationship my colleagues and I strengthened among the medical staff would hopefully lead to higher efficacy in how the hospital delivers medical services. The relationship we fostered between the hospital and the community will encourage elders to seek professional medical help when needed. Lastly, the relationship we built between international visitors and the Tzu-Chi foundation would hopefully encourage more charity efforts globally. These impacts are sustainable as the Tzu-Chi foundation keeps good relationships with patients, visitors, and staff; and holds regular reunions to make sure everyone is doing fine.

Hopefully, the good will of charity, environmental protection, and patient care we advocated for will inspire more people to do good for the community.

Lesson learned from being in an unfamiliar environment

During my LiA experience, I improved my Taiwanese level (a local dialect) as many of my colleagues and patients speak Taiwanese. Even though I can understand Taiwanese, it was difficult for me to communicate fluently. To better approach others, I tried my best to use the common language.

I also stepped out my comfort zone by taking part in non-medical-related activities like doing recycling and fund-raising. By doing so, I learned much more about other aspects of leadership and even about myself during my LiA project.

