

2019 World Hospice & Palliative Care day - Hospice Film Festival

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Dog Portrait Rights: Taiwan Guide Dog Association

Providing the Warmest Comfort: The Amazing Healing Power of Dogs on Terminal Patients

"In fact, palliative care in many countries has been done very well, and each has its own attributes; as a result, each has something that we can learn from," says

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Deep Learning and Spiritual Improvement Hospice Spiritual Caregiver Training Courses

As palliative care continues to advance internationally, Cheng Yuyi, the attending physician of the Family Medicine Department at National Taiwan University

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2019 World Hospice & Palliative Care day - Hospice Film Festival

In recognition of World Hospice Day, this year's Hospice Foundation of Taiwan's event Hospice Film and Book Fair was held in Taipei Main Station's lobby. While people were invited to watch relaxing and witty films, they were also inspired to reconsider and ponder on the topic of death. These films helped remind them of precious family values and the meaning of life.



Videography is one of the easiest and most effective tools to convey information for the public. As such, Hospice Film and Book Fair carefully selected two films related to the subject of life and death in an attempt to arouse people's reflection on their own lives.

Prof. Wang Yawei, an assistant professor at the National Chengchi University's College of Communication and curator of the Hospice Film and Book Fair this year, intentionally selected the films *Coco* and *The Human Condition – Part 1 (the Abridged Edition)*, which are both lighthearted and interesting. These easy to understand video masterpieces lead the public to rethink the important issue of life and death from different angles.



Overcoming Environmental Obstacles and Creating a Spiritual Space for All People

“I chose Taipei Main Station for the film fair because of its numerous passersby who are comprised of different groups,” says Prof. Wang Yawei. “I believe this open and interactive way to let people approach the issues of life and death is more attractive than lectures or articles.”

However, there are many challenges with playing films in such a large public place. For instance, the appropriate equipment must be chosen to play films in such a well-lit place. Then there's endless background voice interruptions such as railroad station announcements, people's conversations, and commercial activities in the surrounding stores. In order to reduce all kinds of interference and allow the participants to enjoy the best viewing experience, the equipment was carefully deliberated and finalized after several meetings and discussions. The Hospice Foundation of Taiwan also arranged a number of volunteers to promote the activities and guide the visitors on the day of the event so that more people could enjoy the films.

Death Is a Common Human Experience Making Hospice Care an Universal Issue

Contrasting the serious, sad, and taboo attitude of the Taiwanese people when facing death, this year's film fair included the lighthearted singing and dancing animation film *Coco* and the humorous *The Human Condition – Part 1 (the Abridged Edition)*. The two films depicted different attitudes on life and death in distinct cultures providing the audiences the opportunity to ponder over the different views on hospice care.

Prof. Wang Yawei expressed that although the two films selected in this year's film fair came from very different cultures, they have one thing in common: the protagonist in each film resolves one's internal ambiguity and obsession, and in the process, breaks the boundary between the human world and the afterlife to pursue the meaning of life. Through these films, the Hospice Foundation of Taiwan hopes to guide everyone into thinking about death as a borderless experience common to all, and start pondering about the relationship between the “Four Principles of Life” (give thanks, make amends, express love, and say goodbye) and dying a good death.

***Coco* Finding Love on the Day of the Dead in the Land of the Dead**

The film fair kicked off with *Coco*, a film produced by Pixar Animation Studios and won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film. Rich and bright colors and artistic designs were used in *Coco* to indicate the strong sense of Mexican culture on its traditional Day of the Dead. In contrast to the expected sadness that Taiwanese people associate with death and parting, the Hospice Foundation of Taiwan wished to use the storyline based on Mexican traditional culture to show that there are other viewpoints when faced with death.

Coco tells the story of a young boy named Miguel who grew up in a family where music is regarded as a taboo; however, he couldn't hold back his dream of music and, by fate, entered the world of the undead.





In his continuous quest for his dream and fame, he embarks on a long journey searching for his ultimate hero, Héctor, his great-great-grandfather. In the end, he finally realizes that the true meaning of having existed is not in one's fame or fortune in life, but lies in the love and memory from the living family members. That is, the value of a person's life is determined by what his or her living family members remember. When Miguel pleaded to his great-great-grandmother Imelda for his great-great-grandfather Héctor, he says, "You don't have to forgive him, but we shouldn't forget him." This also emphasizes the importance of reconciliation, and when faced with the uncertainties in life, one must not miss the opportunities to give thanks, make amends, express love, and say goodbye.

The Human Condition – Part 1 Return to the World of the Living and Let Go of Obsessions



The second film at this year's film festival is *The Human Condition – Part 1* (the Abridged Edition) provided by Greenray Theatre Company. Prof. Wang Yawei says he chose this play not only because Director Wu Nianzhen is the spokesperson of the Hospice Foundation in Taiwan, but also because of the unique connection between plays and people. People like to watch plays because it is like witnessing the epitome of others' lives, which may also reflect the life experiences of the viewers. In addition, a play's storytelling style often provides a safe distance for the audience, making it more touching and shocking, and thus, causing more resonance in the mind of the audiences. Therefore, a play can be said to be a strong yet gentle form of media.

The Human Condition – Part 1 (the Abridged Edition), the first play that Dir. Wu Nianzhen has ever written and directed, describes a grandmother who had died for many years, but is able to cross the border from death to life as she returns to the world of the living. Her granddaughter Amei is possessed by the spirit of the grandmother, and the play then develops into a series of hilarious plots with her loved ones. The reason why the grandmother in Dir. Wu Nianzhen's story returns to the world of the living is to finish an unfulfilled wish in her life, which is to give thanks and blessings to her long time caregiver. Prof. Wang Yawei believes





that this play faithfully describes the social phenomenon Dir. Wu Nianzhen observed, that is, Taiwanese culture is often restrained and implicit where most people are not accustomed to expressing emotions, and as a result, would bring their gratitude or grievances to their graves. The Hospice Foundation of Taiwan hopes that through the humorous plot of *The Human Condition – Part 1 (the Abridged Edition)* on World Hospice and Palliative Care Day, people will see these serious and important issues in a more relaxed atmosphere.

My Treatments, My Decisions; Deepened Learning with Interactive Lectures

Although Taiwan's hospitals are very reputable at helping patients achieve the concept of “dying well, talking about death itself remains a serious taboo in Taiwanese traditional culture. Besides showing films at the international World Hospice and Palliative Care Day event in order for people to have a deepened understanding of hospice care as it relates to our daily lives, has also the Patient Autonomy Rights Act. The Hospice Foundation of Taiwan invited TEDxTaipei lecturer, Dr. Zhu Weimin from Taichung Veterans General Hospital to give an interactive lecture right after the showing of *Coco*. Heightened by strong impressions from the movie, the audiences seemed to effectively embrace the seeds of the hospice care concept; these seeds will eventually sprout and help them in their own future dying well planning.

The celebrity lecture in the afternoon attracted even more people because the Hospice Care Foundation of Taiwan invited its spokesperson - known to be "the best storytelling figure in Taiwan" - Director Wu Nianzhen, to talk about how he had created *The Human Condition – Part 1 (the Abridged Edition)* nineteen years ago. Prof. Wang Yawei said, “Through these nineteen years, Dir. Wu has gained more insight through the ever-changing time and circumstances, especially when he had a serious illness several years back, which gave him a different point of view and opinion on the subject of death.” Therefore, Dir. Wu Nianzhen was again invited to "tell a story" this year. His speech stirred up the audiences with various perspectives on life.

In addition to the film fair that day, a "Hospice Book Exhibition Area" was showcased next to the film site. In response to the international significance of the World Hospice and Palliative Care Day, more than 80 domestic and international hospice care-related books and children's picture books were exhibited. The hope is for the public to be touched by their participation in this international event,



and to recognize that hospice care has become a global trend and common issue for all. Furthermore, there was a "Charity Bazaar" to allow people who support hospice care to take more active roles.

On weekends and holidays, locals and tourists of different backgrounds travel through the lobby of Taipei Main Station. They come and go, or sometimes stop briefly. Prof. Wang Yawei said frankly, "It is almost impossible to let passersby learn about hospice and palliative care in such a short time. However, as long as people can see the existence of hospice care, even if it's just a glance, it can draw people's attention and conversation towards the issue of life, including communication and reconciliation with family members. This would be the biggest achievement of the Hospice Film and Book Fair."

Providing the Warmest Comfort: The Amazing Healing Power of Dogs on Terminal Patients

"Oba, you are here!" rings throughout the hospital whenever Taipei Veterans General Hospital's adjuvant therapy dog, Oba, appears; the hearts of many patients and their families have been melted by these innocent puppy eyes. Animal therapy has been around for many years, and the children and the medical team have overcome various challenges to bring healing to the hearts of patients in the ward, old and young alike.

In the Dade Hospice Ward at the Taipei Veterans General Hospital ("TVGH"), when the doctor is making his rounds, he is often quietly followed by a small assistant behind him. When patients and families see this assistant, their facial expressions become relaxed, and smiles appear. The canine assistant certainly has a very important role in the TVGH Dade Hospice care team. It is TVGH's "Dog Doctor" named "Oba".

Changing Career Paths: Guide Dog Transforms into Adjuvant Therapy Dog

With its stable personality, Oba looks calm even in unexpected situations. Originally, it was trained as a guide dog, but because it walked so slowly, it couldn't find any visually impaired person to work with.

Even though it did not end up serving as a guide dog in the hospital, nevertheless, Oba was very useful, changing its career path as it entered the TVGH Dade Hospice Ward as an adjuvant therapy dog. He soon became an angel in the ward and gathered many fans. However, few people knew that in the course of introducing Oba as adjuvant therapy dog, the entire medical team went through many challenges and trials.



Dog Portrait Rights: Taiwan Guide Dog Association

Prior to the resident adjuvant treatment dog program, the Taiwan Guide Dog Association would bring 2 to 4 guide dogs to Dade's ward every 2 weeks for visiting services. Every time the dogs arrived, the atmosphere in the ward became lively and cheerful, but due to the large number of patients, the interaction time for each dog and patient was quite limited. Therefore, in early 2019, the Taiwan Guide Dog Association became the first in Taiwan to propose a resident service plan, hoping to keep dogs in the hospital for longer periods while accompanying patients in the hospice ward.

Despite the favorable recommendation of the Taiwan Guide Dog Association and support from the TVGH Dade Hospice Ward team, there were still many concerns. For example, the daily care of the dogs requires a lot of manpower and effort. Each medical staff already had a full schedule, and the implementation seemed difficult. In the midst of the dilemma, a joint effort by nursing caregiver Ms. Yang Wanling and nursing educator Ms. Liu Xiaojing, rose to take over this task, which began their relationship with Oba.



Self-Disciplined Life Style, Even Better than Human



Both caregivers said they had experiences in raising dogs when they were young, but it was still quite different taking care of professional working dogs. Since Oba's living habits and social etiquette had already been trained very well, their main task would be regarding

Oba's daily routine, such as cleanliness, health, and maintaining its training performance. Just for these duties, the two caregivers spent three months learning in the Taiwan Guide Dog Association. During the training process, they fully realized how difficult it was to take care of a guide dog.

During the period, the team also thought about what Oba could do after it officially joined the ward, especially when the nature between a guide dog and an adjuvant therapy dog is different. No one is supposed to play with a guide dog, including not touching or calling it; however, the work of adjuvant therapy dogs is mainly to provide patients with various forms of companionship and comfort, which heavily entails interacting with people. Thus, the question arose of if and what key adjustments needed to be made in Oba's service model.



Fortunately, these concerns disappeared after Oba officially started its work. Oba, who is highly cooperative, did not refuse requests to play from the patients. Sometimes, the patients or their families simply could not help but reach for a warm hug and Oba graciously accepts. Upon such interactions with feeling Oba or even sleeping next to Oba, many patients have obtained great comfort for both body and mind.

In order to comply with various specifications of the medical institution, in addition to the regular teeth brushing, face washing, body cleaning and combing, Oba also has a health journal, which is a detailed health record including monthly flea removal and heartworm prevention, as well as annual vaccination and health examinations. It helps to achieve regularity in Oba's daily eating, urinating, and various other activities such that the dog's rituals are even better organized than some people!

In fact, the medical team took such good care of Oba that, according to Yang Wanling with a smile, "Oba has recently gained 0.5 kg. Fearing that Oba might be recalled by the Taiwan Guide Dog Association due to overweight issues, staff members have taken it swimming and exercising, and together, we are more strictly monitoring its diet."

Currently, Oba's daily work is to accompany the doctor to make rounds in the ward. Whenever new patients are admitted, it will also be introduced to the patients and their family. When patients apply for companionship with Oba, the medical team will first evaluate the patients' condition and confirm the safety of the environment. In particular, patients with terminal cancer usually have many intubations on their bodies, which make them more fragile and easily injured. Therefore, special attention to safety must be made when patients wish to interact with Oba.

Heartwarming Interaction and Companionship Make Life Complete



According to Chen Xiaoni, the nursing director of Dade Hospice Ward, since Oba joined the team, not only have the patients and their families been helped, but also the medical team has benefited. She says, "The nursing staff's emotions inevitably fluctuate due to working in intensive life-and-death situations all the time, and so when they are feeling down, they find Oba to help relieve pressure and receive emotional healing for themselves. I often see staff members walking toward Oba with frustration on their faces, but as they walk away they have big smiles. I can only say that Oba's treatment works amazingly well for everyone!"



In less than a year, many touching stories of Oba and patients have been witnessed. One of the most impressive stories that Liu Xiaojing remembers is a 6-year-old child with terminal cancer in the pediatric ward. At that time, his mother desired that the child could see Oba, so after obtaining the consent of his attending physician, nurse, and other related personnel, Oba was brought to the ward.

On the day of Oba's visit, children from other wards came around curiously, and played with Oba. With friendly shaking of her tail, Oba responded playfully to the children's enthusiasm. Because the 6-year-old child was vaguely conscious, Liu Xiaojing obeyed his mother's request and lifted Oba onto the hospital bed to accompany her son. At that moment, the boy's hand slid into Oba's vest, and at first, the mother was afraid that the child would feel uncomfortable and she lifted his hand back; however, unexpectedly, the child slowly withdrew his hand from the mother, and returned to Oba's vest. He even started petting and rubbing Oba's hair.

Afterwards, the mother excitedly told Liu Xiaojing that her child had not had such an active and positive reaction for a long time. She also mentioned that the child loved dogs very much and recalled her promise to the child that he could have a dog when he was in the third grade. However, the child became ill with cancer, and many treatments and efforts failed. The mother knew that this wish could not come true, so she hoped that Oba could continue to accompany the child and fulfill his wish of having a dog. Just two weeks later, the child passed away. Nevertheless, even today, Liu Xiaojing remembers the warm and affectionate scene of that moment, and her eyes still reddens.





There was another terminal cancer patient who also loved dogs. At the later stage of cancer, half of his body was severely eroded by cancer cells. The severe pain often made it difficult for him to eat or sleep, but as soon as he saw Oba, his pain seemed to disappear and a long-lost smile reappeared in its place. His affection for Oba was so obvious that it even made his wife jealous because every time Oba visited, he would call Oba's name softly, pat the side of his bed, and have Oba sleep next to him. Oba made it possible for this patient to find restful sleep.

During that period with this patient, Oba would automatically report to the door of the ward every day, ready for duty. On the morning when he was about to pass away, the patient developed terminal restlessness, and his behavior, emotions, and physical reactions were difficult to control. However, when Oba appeared at his door on that day, the patient became surprisingly stabilized; when he fell asleep for the last time, Oba was right next to him.

As family members take care of their relatives in the hospice ward, they are burdened physically, mentally, and emotionally. To them, Oba is like a healing prescription, helping them ease and forget worries so that they can catch a breath and relax. After patients pass away, most family members are reluctant to return to a place of sadness; however, in Oba's case, many people actually return to visit because they want to see Oba. These family members are very grateful to Oba for having created such beautiful end-of-life memories for them, and provided a strong, meaningful bond with their loved ones.

Changing Traditional Thinking by Creating a Friendly Environment for Adjuvant Therapy Dogs

Today, the hospital staff has become accustomed to Oba's presence. The canine friend is really popular and is often greeted with great fanfare around the hospital. Looking back to the beginning of the resident adjuvant therapy dog program, the medical team had initial doubts and objections, including fear that the dog's barking would disturb patients' recuperation; defecating and cleaning problems would affect the sanitation of the medical environment; and walking and running would scare or disrupt patients and their families, and etc. In order to eliminate these doubts, in addition to the health journal and guide dog training regulations mentioned previously, the medical team also established a set of adjuvant therapy dog SOPs to ensure that these problems do not occur. Thus far, Oba's excellent performance has been the best proof of his success.



Chen Xiaoni said that interaction with animals can make people feel happy and bring about a positive, calming effect; thus, animal-assisted activities can be used in children's learning, last stage of life companionship, and physical and mental rehabilitation.

For example, one dementia patient who had chronic diseases used to constantly take off all his clothes at a pace faster than the nursing staff could put them back on, so the caregiver was always agitated when taking care of him. Then one day, the Taiwan Guide Dog Association came with several dogs to visit, and some people suggested to let that patient hold a dog's leash. Surprisingly, as he held the leash eagerly with both hands, he quickly calmed down and dozed off, no longer frantically ripping off his clothes. Later, when the staff wanted to take the leash away from his hands, he still held on tightly to it, refusing to let go.

"In fact, adjuvant therapy dogs have already been around for many years in other countries," says Yang Wanglin. "For example, in Japan, hospitals not only have dog veterinarians permanently stationed, but also have dedicated one-on-one trainers to take care of these dogs. In some cases, the hospitals have even designed special isolation gowns allowing dog doctors to enter isolation wards for visiting purposes."

Here in Taiwan, there are also Dog Veterinarian and Professional Animal-Assisted Therapy Associations that regularly visit nursing homes and special education centers to provide related services. Unfortunately, due to current regulations, only guide dogs can enter public venues. Coupled with insufficient publicity, adjuvant therapy dogs often encounter obstacles and skeptical looks when they enter medical institutions. It is hoped that in the near future, with more efforts in publicity and promotion, Taiwan can provide a friendlier service environment for adjuvant therapy dogs in order to benefit more patients.

Deep Learning and Spiritual Improvement Hospice Spiritual Caregiver Training Courses



As patients' enter their terminal stage of illness, along with the decline of physical function, their inner spiritual needs often heighten in response. Thus, the caregiver must be sensitive to the spiritual needs of the patients, and be calm and sensitive in supporting them because sometimes the patients will find inner resolution all on their own.

Since spiritual care is full of challenges and uncertainties, it often becomes a trial for the hospice team members in clinical care. To this end, the Hospice Foundation of Taiwan ("HFT") has been actively involved in providing training courses such as the "Spiritual Academy." Since HFT's inception, it has been committed to improving the spiritual care knowledge and skills of medical professionals. With these skill sets, they are able to better help patients prepare early for their deaths, reduce their fear of death, assist them in completing their wills, and build up their inner wellbeing.

This year, two "Hospice Spiritual Caregiver Training Courses" were held for medical staff to explore in depth the definition of spirituality, assessment for

needs, treatment, and implementation. Before the course, professionals who had received spiritual care training from HFT over the years and have continuously attended in the courses and also assisted in clinical services were invited to participate in the "Group Leadership Training Camp," which lasted three days and two nights. After the training, they served as team leaders to lead group discussions using role playing, making the course more applicable.

Five social workers who participated in the "Group Leadership Training Camp" were invited to share their thoughts with the readers of this issue regarding spiritual care and the courses they took. They are from different hospitals and backgrounds.



Turning Spiritual Power into Capability for Progress

Despite the daily grind of work in facing numerous patients and their families who are suffering with no solutions, I have always reminded myself that since this is a job that helps others, I must not allow my heart to grow cold and calloused. Thus, I take just a little spare time everyday to check on whether my heart is still warm or not. This is how a spiritual lesson for me started one evening.

I realized that even if we are proficient in helping others, when we face ourselves as narrators, we will sort things out clearly as we transform from the active role into a passive listener, resulting in seeing the courageous choices we have to make. We work hard in climbing the spiritual obstacles as we bounce between reality and expectations, whether we charge ahead or we take a step back, we don't give up. After all, "significance" is a collection of experiences. One has to feel and understand that: "It's not what life brings me, but what I want to accomplish."

As we adjust the pace, the overall motivation also follows. The spiritual connection comes not only from ourselves, but also from the field in which space and time are interwoven. Why is there such a spiritual training camp? It stems mainly from the foundation's awareness of the clinical staff's needs for spiritual care. This unexpected gift and rare encounter produced a chapter on hospice spiritual seeds called "Adherence to Transforming Spiritual Power into a Nutrient for the Beginning" by Tsai Hweifang (Social Worker at Tri-Service General Hospital).

During one activity at the training camp, everyone used yarn to mark off their comfort zones, and then confided to their partners within these boundaries. Later, they shouted out their frustrations, fears and anger without the everyday mask of politeness. "Let anger surface as a kind of emotion; reveal the fear and pain behind it; let these emotions show and breath; and enjoy the peacefulness, wisdom, and healing after the painful disclosure, so the inner spirits can flow freely." These are the exact words Ms. Yu Shi said in her class which I couldn't agree with more.

On Monday, after returning to the daily routine of life, Ms. Yu Shi sent me a message asking me to share my feedback and experiences of the training camp. Here is my response: "I feel that the training has provided me with internal strength and constant support for the busyness at work. Furthermore, I have come to realize the warmth and tranquility of the spirit."

