



# Dust Explosion Burn Care

ER FRONT LINE FOR THE WATER  
PARK DUST EXPLOSION HURT ONE

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On June 27, I went to work as usual - punching my time card, changing nurse uniforms, and attending patients in triage and registration. It was a short night-shift. After 9 pm, Director Ho (Ho Yaw-Tsan, emergency medicine dept. director) came and said, "Do you know patients will be coming from the Formosa Fun Coast explosion site?" I said: "I did not hear anything. It might not be true since it is so far away." Soon, a logistic manager in charge of emergency run down announced: "Eight patients are coming in; I just received a phone call from perhaps a Sister's child who said they will come in shortly."

### **Emergency Alert and Shockwaves**

If that was the case, we needed to be prepared. Team leaders Peiqi, Yixuan and I immediately held discussions on preparation, clearing some areas in triage, logistics and supplies, registration procedures to identify patients. We thought there would be few victims with less severe cases. We really couldn't imagine the severity and terrible condition of the victims, or even the quantity of patients.

Superintendent Chao You-Chen, Deputy Superintendent Chang Heng-Chia, and Night Shift Head Nurse Tsai Pi-Chueh all came to the emergency room. It was nerve-racking moment and I was tense and nervous. Although I have been in nursing for quite some time, I haven't encountered such a large number of injured victims, except in drills. I tried to recall all the training details out from memories and to remind myself not to make any mistake.

I hurried out to attend to patient as soon as a vehicle arrived at the emergency room. From the back seats, a mother and her child told me that the patient was from Formosa Fun Coast explosion site. I replied, "OK!" I then opened the passenger door and saw a beautiful girl covered in a wet towel. I asked her, "Can you come out, I can help you?" she said, "I can, but it really hurts!" I gently touched her arm and found a very fragile skin peeling off. I immediately stopped her. "No, you do not get up on your own. " Her father said, "Let me hold you, bear with me, a bed is on the side." I saw her lower body with pieces of skin peeling off. This was the most serious burn I had ever seen since I started working in the hospital. While I was pushing her to emergency room, I could almost hear everyone's thoughts. "It is not a mild or simple red blister case coming from a faraway area." I was scared by what happened but went back to the triage area. I was nervous and tense, and sick in my stomach.

## **Emergency Triage with Many Injuries – a Test**

Tsai Pi-Chueh started dispatching medical staff from upstairs, and broadcast emergency request. Within a very short time, staff started to appear in the emergency area and standing-by; some began to unbox burnt medicine while others locate medical supplies. Then came the general broadcast: “Two patients coming - a mild and a severe case...” I heard what was said and then an ambulance arrived. They were young people with burns all over their bodies. When I ushered them to the emergency room, I thought, “They are all serious cases, nothing close to being mild.”

Ambulances arrived one after another. In less than 10 minutes, the triage area was full of patients with serious degrees of burn, lying desperately in bed. I attended to them quickly, assigning each patient to a team of two therapists, two physicians for immediate treatment. More medical staff arrived in a short time, many of them came to me for assignments; but I had no clue as to how many more will arrive...

While I was busy triaging, I saw volunteers who said goodbye to me earlier came back at 11 pm. They assisted to locate painkillers, antibiotics, contact patients’ families, or to help families find their patients. Many patients’ family members voluntarily helped push the beds and keep the pathway clear. Regular emergency patients were patient for their turns because they knew the patients in front of them were really severe. Of course, there were some patients who feel they should be treated urgently reminded us to hurry.

## **Saving Lives Regardless of Who You Are**

When a coworker of the long night-shift took over the triage, I immediately went to the examination room to help. I saw personnel from different departments including neurology, pediatrics, and surgery helping to administer CVP, or asking about what they could do to help, and every ward nurse helping to administer injections or applying burn ointment.

I couldn’t forget the face of each patient coming through triage; I saw fear in their eyes, expression of deep sorrow, severely damaged body and their cries for suffering. Even today, the picture is still fresh.

That night, all hospitals were full of the burn patients; I think every medical personnel couldn't forget it. I felt my heart was especially heavy after experiencing the night.

Really, for the first time encountering a large number of injuries, I couldn't think straight. Fortunately, I had made preparation in logistics and scheduling of human resources beforehand. It would be so easy to make mistakes because of a sudden burst of patients with urgency for the first time. During the night, all our clinical colleagues showed their enthusiasm and energy. It was the first time to feel unified in our hospital, and the Tzu Chi brothers and sisters worked together as one. Thanks to all my colleagues in other departments who came to assist in the emergencies. I am really thankful, and with deep gratitude.

