



Rite of Passage

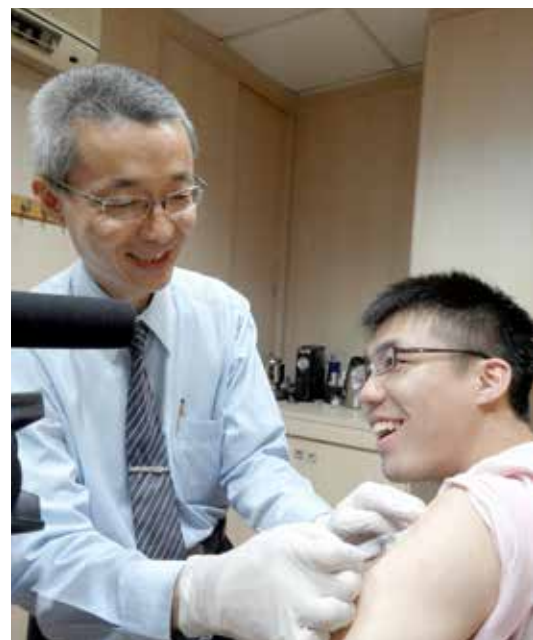
By: Wei-Ting Wei, Wei-Yun Peng, Szu-Chi Huang



One afternoon, a small room used for peripheral blood stem cell collection was filled with warm laughter. The previous winter, Yu-Heng, who had just turned eighteen and was preparing for his college entrance examination, received the news from Buddhist Tzu Chi Stem Cells Center (BTCSCC) that he had been successfully matched with a patient. In the early spring of this year he went to Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital and, without any hesitation, rolled up his sleeve, with the sole wish to save another's life. Supt. Ruey-Ho Kao of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, Chief Secretary Hsing-Chu Chen, the wife of Tzu Chi Medical Mission CEO Sister Tzu-Lien, and the Director of the Stem Cell Center Kuo-Liang Yang made a special trip to visit Yu-Heng. They got together to share some interesting stories about marrow donation.

Son Donates Marrow While Father Starts His Business

Yu-Heng's father, Dr. Tien-Hao Yeh, is a member of TIMA in Southern Taiwan Chapter and a real life model for one of the characters in the Da Ai TV show "The Agreement of White Robe". His plastic surgery clinic in Kaohsiung had been committed in "Tzu Chi Stem Cell Team" for many years. In January 2012, the clinic also collaborated with Tzu Chi Stem Cell Center, to provide marrow donors in the Southern Taiwan a convenient location to receive growth hormone injections and donor follow-up monitoring. Dr. Yeh was ready to help, but there were no donors who needed the service. Finally, there was an opportunity to help, and the donor that matched was his own son. "Destiny is incredible," said Dr. Yeh, smilingly.



Yu-Heng Yeh(right) and the marrow recipient were matched successfully, and Yu-Heng became the first marrow donor who received growth hormone injections in his father's clinic, one of the clinics that collaborate with Buddhist Tzu Chi Stem Cells Center.

Dr. Tien-Hao Yeh's wife, Pharmacist Hung-Yen Chen, is also a member of the stem cell team of BTCSCC. She had devoted much effort to promoting bone marrow donation over the years. In Kaohsiung Tsoying community, one can spot Dr. Yeh's family busily involved in various kinds of activities. Dr. Yeh's youngest son, Yu-Heng Yeh, who turned 17 two summers ago, followed in his two older brothers' footsteps, rolled up his sleeves and donated 10 cc of blood in response to "love of water" matching activity. (Since then, the legal age was raised to 18 years old.) Fifteen months later, while shopping, he received a phone call from this brother about the good news - the match was successful. He first thought, "He must be joking!" but after he had confirmed with his parents, he realized that he was the lucky one out of a hundred thousandth. Yu-Heng was very excited.

Cherish the Life of Others and Make a World of Difference

Yu-Heng, 176 cm tall and only 53 kg in weight, picked up jogging since junior high. He was even placed second at his school track and



During the process of collecting stem cells, Yu-Heng's arm ached, and Dr. Tien-Hao Yeh tenderly massages his son's sore arm.

field competition. Even though he already led a healthy living style, Yu-Heng paid even more attention to his health and wellness after he received the successful matching notice. Not only did he avoid midnight snacks and cold desserts, but also had some supplemental food to nourish his body, and even went online to obtain health information. All the effort he put in would benefit the marrow recipient. When injecting the growth hormone, Dr. Tien-Hao Yeh not only personally injected four shots for his son, but also carefully oversaw his son's discomfort. Dr. Yeh stated, "Although Yu-Heng is a bit underweight, he is strong. The love and care from the Tzu Chi volunteers in Kaohsiung District will also sustain Yu-Heng for the duration of his mission. I am so proud of him, and I am grateful."

"Marrow donation is like my rite of passage!" For the shy Yu-Heng, this is a rare chance to be educated about life and has left an indelible imprint in his young life. Yu-Heng said that bone marrow transplant for the bone marrow recipient is the start of returning to a healthy life; however, for him, it is an opportunity to begin a new life. His life was completely changed from the moment he learned that the match was



Photo depicts Dr. Tian-Hao Yeh attends a free clinic in Tacloban, Philippine to comfort the Typhoon Haiyan victims.

受贈者：

明天是我捐骨髓的日子，很高興能與你

配對到，聽到配對到時，覺得自己很榮幸。

在接受生長因子後，並沒有太多的不舒適，相信你
比我更辛苦(加油!加油!)但你一定可以渡過
這次的難關，因為我有跟韋韋說好囉!

(進入別人身體不可與人打架要和平相處 😊)

保持快樂的心情，相信自己能康復，就能康
復喔!!! 希望幾年後能相遇

I hope everything goes well

(我希望一切順利 😊)



The handwritten words and drawing are the most sincere blessings from Yu-Heng to his recipient whom he has never met.

successful. His concentration on his studies has improved, and he knows the direction for his future life. He is preparing for the college entrance examination and wants to become a veterinarian to take care of wounded animals.

Dr. Yeh also mentioned his observations about his son's changes. After receiving the news, he noticed in their conversations, that his son began to contemplate on life issues. During the process of injecting growth hormone, Yu-Heng constantly asked Dr. Yeh questions, such as how to make sure to extract enough blood to obtain the necessary number of stem cells. This made Dr. Yeh realize that his son had become more compassionate and matured. Yu-Heng's mother Chen Hung-Yen also mentioned that Ye-Heng used to complain about physical aches and pain during adolescence. However, during the preparation process

for donating blood stem cells, he endured chest tightness, muscle aching and other issues due to growth hormone. Yu-Heng did not show any discomfort; instead, he just gently said, “For me the pain is momentary; for the bone marrow recipient, the pain has been chronic.”

“I have had a pact with my stem cells! Once entering the other person’s body, they are not allowed to fight with the other stem cells. They have to make peace!” A few days before the donation, Yu-Heng wrote down his feelings on the card. The card, which is designed by him, shows a doctor wearing a stethoscope and a patient both surrounded by the sun and a field of clover. Yu-Heng said he hoped to use this card to send hope, love, and blessings to his recipient whom he has never met. He wished him peace and health. The pure thoughts and wishes of a young boy may help the leukemia patient through to the new dawn of life.



Bone marrow donation is a happy event for the Tzu Chi family. From left: the donor Yu-Heng Yeh, his mother Hung-Yen Chen, Supt. Ruey-Ho Kao, Dr. Tien-Hao Yeh, Sister Tzu-Lien (Wife of Tzu Chi Medical Mission CEO), Stem Cells Team Volunteer Chi-Chuan Wu, and Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital Chief Secretary Hsin-Chu Chen.