

THE SYSTEM OF HOSPITAL CARE IN TAIPEI CITY

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In any community the hospital is an integral part of that society. The hospitals serve the need of the community. Since the community varies from one area to another, the characteristics of hospitals in one area differ than those of other areas.

Taipei is the political, military, culture and economic center of the Republic of China. Air transportation connects Taipei with every major cities in Asia and other continents—more than 30 international flights in and out daily. Railways and highways connect Taipei with other major cities in Taiwan. Taipei is a special municipality of the Republic of China. Although Taipei is in Taiwan geographically, still as a special city, Taipei is directly under the Executive Yuan—the executive branch of the government—and having the same status with the Taiwan Provincial Government.

In our society there is a strong sense of family unity. There is an old saying: "Assist others in need, help others in sickness". Our society is based on many close-knit families. In the human relations it is full of harmony and kindness. Regardless the hardships in term of material enjoyment, people developed normal mentality and strong sense of psychological adaptability. People in every situation will receive the care and concern from others. We treat the elders like our own elders and youngsters like own youngsters. Nobody have the feeling of forgotten people. When a person becomes ill, his family and his friends will provide very good care. Hospital admissions usually not sought by patients with minor ailment. Once a person being admitted to a hospital, he will be surrounded by his family as well as his friends. Hospitals, therefore, instead of cold institutions, that separate the patient from his family and friends, have actually become an extension part of patient's home. Instead of doctors, nurses that take care of

the patients in hospitals, in our hospitals, the patients' family and friends also provide care to the patients. Oftentime, the physical strength and mental reserve of patients' family members become over-taxed. Very few chronic cases in our hospitals, only acute cases which really need to be hospitalized are in our hospitals.

Taipei City comprises an area of 272.15 square kilometers. Total population at the end of 1968 was one million six hundred thousand, they belonged to three hundred fifty thousand households. The age composition was 39% below 14 years old and 59% between 15 to 64 years old and 2% over 65 years of age.

The lowest temperature is in February, average about 14.8°C. and highest in July, average about 28.2°C. The annual average temperature is 22°C. The annual rainfall is 2,100 mm, most rain in five months from May to September, about 60% annual rainfall, the other seven months have the balance of 40%. However, the rain was rather pleasant, because many people say: "The raining season is the dry season, the dry season is the wet season". The rainfall in summer months usually consist of shower, once rain is over, the air become fresh and clean. The winter months is misty, drizzling, the amount of rainfall is not much, but it is damp, wet and cold. Most southwesterly wind in summer and northeasterly wind in winter with annual wind velocity of 3 meter per second.

What is a hospital? Legally speaking, the law governing the hospital is the Regulations Governing Hospitals and Clinics. The Articles 2 and 5 are hereby stated below:

1. Places receiving in-patients are hospitals; places providing for outpatient care are clinics. (Article 2)
2. Hospitals should have a minimum of two doctors, one pharmacist or assistant pharmacist, with one doctor on duty all the time. (Article 5)

According to Taipei Municipal Health Department, the number of hospitals and bed capacity at the end of January 1970 were 42 hospitals and 4,779 beds. About one bed for every 333 persons or 3 hospital beds per 1,000 persons. However, this figure is highly misleading, first the number of hospital beds is much more than this 4,779 beds, many doctors operate their own clinics with less than 10 beds but did not register as hospitals, besides, military hospitals provide both inpatient and out-patient care to civilian population. Conservative speaking, at least 1,000 more hospital beds are available in Taipei. On the other hand, since hospitals in Taipei represent the best available medical care possible in entire Taiwan, doctors in other cities all refer more serious and complicated cases to Taipei for diagnosis and treatment.

Now I would like to analyze these 42 hospitals and 4,779 beds they have.

Government hospitals:	16 (38%)	3,251 beds (68%)
Private hospitals:	26 (62%)	1,528 beds (32%)

In the Government Hospitals we can see several groups of administrative agencies:

National Government hospitals:	2	1,809 beds
Provincial Government hospitals:	4	663 beds

Municipal Government hospitals:	7	571 beds
Public Enterprise hospitals:	3	208 beds

On the care provided by the Government Hospitals, the National Government hospitals - National Taiwan University Hospital and Veterans General Hospital - provide the best care available. Both are general hospitals staffed by the most experienced doctors. The Provincial Government hospitals are 4 hospitals for special care - 100 beds in a TB hospital, 480 beds in a NP hospital, 30 beds in a children hospital, 53 beds in an OBS & GYN hospital. The 571 beds in 7 hospitals under the Municipal Government are mostly general hospital beds, some belong to Obs. & Gyn. and some belong to communicable disease - isolation hospital. The Public Enterprise hospitals are under Taiwan Railway Administration, Taiwan Power Company and Taiwan Postal Administration. These are all general hospital beds. These 3,251 beds in 16 government hospitals as far as the function concerned, they can be divided as following:

General Hospital beds:	2,473 beds
Special Hospital beds:	
T. B. beds:	100 beds
Children beds	30 beds
Obs. & Gyn. beds:	103 beds
NP beds:	510 beds
Communicable Disease beds:	35 beds

The Private Hospitals can be further divided into:

Missionary hospitals:	2	350 beds
Proprietary hospitals:	24	1,178 beds

The bed capacity of these 26 private hospitals is listed below:

Under 25 beds	2
25 - 50 beds	14
51 - 75 beds	3
76 - 100 beds	6
101 beds or over	1

Most of the private hospitals are below 50 beds.

These 1,528 beds in 26 private hospitals as far as the function concerned, they can be divided as following:

General hospitals:	12	744 beds
Special hospitals:	14	784 beds
NP hospitals:	7	410 beds
Surgery hospitals:	6	354 beds
Children hospitals:	1	20 beds

It seems rather strange not a single maternity hospitals operated by private practitioners registered with the proper authority.

Among 42 hospitals, 13 of them were established during the past 5 years, their bed

capacity totalling 1,200 beds. Among 42 hospitals, 19 of them were established during the past 10 years, their bed capacity totalling 1,750 beds. The bed capacity of many hospitals has been increasing every year due to the pressure of need additional beds.

At the end of 1968, there were 2,087 doctors (including herb doctors) in Taipei, average 1 doctor in 769 persons. However, this figure is also quite under reported, because this figure only include the doctors with license to practice medicine. Doctors in government hospital do not require license to practice medicine, for instance only a very few among about 300 doctors in National Taiwan University Hospital care to obtain the license, besides, military doctors certainly take care many civilian cases. It is necessary to point out this ratio between the physician and number of persons to serve is very low in Taipei, because Taipei is the largest city in Taiwan, doctors see more patients in big cities and earn more in big cities and easier to catch up with the progress of medicine. Consequently, we have more doctors than many places in the world. Doctors working in government hospitals draw salaries much lower than the income of doctors in private practice. Pay in government hospital is around US\$150 per month, in private hospital is around \$300 per month and in private practice is about \$600 per month.

There are two medical schools in Taipei, one is College of Medicine, National Taiwan University, the other is Taipei Medical College. Each school has about 100 graduates every year. The College of Medicine, National Taiwan University offers a 7 year course. To enter college, high school graduates only have one entrance examination each year. Due to limited capacity in colleges and universities, only about 1/3 can be admitted. Those who can pass the entrance examination and assign to medical school really can be considered the cream of our youth. About 90% of graduates of College of Medicine, National Taiwan University can pass ECFMG examination.

Almost all the hospitals in Taipei are "Closed" type. Regardless of whether the hospital is public or private, no private physicians are allowed to use hospital facilities unless they are appointed to the staff.

The family doctors do not exist in Taipei. We do not have general practitioners that take care the illness of an entire family, instead, when a person is sick, he consult either a clinic or a hospital depends on his financial situation. Some hospitals - private ones - and some doctors are known to charge more, while public hospitals - including national, provincial and municipal levels - usually only charge NT\$10 for each medical consultation which is equivalent to only US\$0.25.

Since we do not have hospital admission through doctors' referral, all patients who enter hospital must go to the outpatient department or emergency service of that Hospital - outpatient departments do not operate on an appointment basis - and let the physician there decide on the need of admission. Admission then depends upon the availability of beds.

Almost all the hospitals are crowded all year around. Admission is extremely diffi-

cult, especially in larger hospitals. Generally, speaking, all the hospitals in Taipei have a large outpatient department, mostly open in the morning with special clinics in the afternoon. The busiest months are July, August - two months with the warmest temperature of the year - most cases are digestive system diseases caused by the food or drink they took into the mouth. The two months with the least patient load in both outpatient and inpatient departments are January and February - Chinese people celebrate lunar New Year which always falls in either in latter part of January or first half of February - most cases in winter months are respiratory system diseases caused by the cold air they inhaled into the mouth. There is an old Chinese saying: "Illness Enter Through Mouth".

Once a patient is admitted, in some of the private hospitals he will find charges are much higher than he can afford, in all the public hospitals he will find charges are more reasonable, still the hospital fee he must pay would be a quite big financial burden, consequently, unless absolute necessary, a patient rather stay in his home, than try to seek hospital admission which is not easy anyway.

During the past 5 years Taipei had added many new hotels to fill the need of ever increasing number of tourist trade, local inhabitants also gradually move from the one-storied Japanese type of wooden houses to multi-storied modern apartment buildings. The fruit of economic prosperity resulted higher standard of living. From May 1968 to the end of December the same year, Taipei increased 2,375 privately owned sedans and 39,741 motorcycles. At that time, 2.7 families own a television. People as whole now enjoy better living and they require better facilities, educational, recreational, medical as well.

Although many hospitals tried to improve their physical plant, but there is still much rooms for improvement, because the purchase of additional equipment, which is greatly needed to improve the present standard of patient care seemed more important. New diagnostic instruments and therapeutic aids do not manufactured in Taipei, these must be imported, not only they cost more but also impossible for after-care service. Construct a new hospital cost much more than a new hotel because hospital offers more service than hotel does, still, construct a new hotel is a sound investment, but a new hospital is not for financial returns.

The attitude toward medical care is based on the old Chinese custom that a sick member of a family becomes the prime concern of the entire family. Hospital visiting hours are impossible to enforce. In fact, it is common practice for members of the family to sleep in the patient's room. Although all the hospitals have nurses on duty all the times, but patient's family members or specially hired maids performed many services which in the hospitals of the Western countries usually handled by the nursing staff.

Food is not related to therapy, many patients do not eat the food supplied by the hospital even when they are paying it. The food is budgeted and charged for separately. The

main reason is that the Chinese have different eating habits; northerners prefer noodles, while southerners prefer rice, dishes are prepared differently. Generally food must be very warm and the amount cooked be small. Usually the Chinese cook prepares only enough for one round table - 10 to 12 persons; otherwise the food is not believed to taste good. Cooking large quantities of food for institutional feeding is contrary to custom and difficult to introduce. Patient's relatives understand this, and nobody complains much about the quality of food, but they do bring the food to the patients, oftentime, the food contains some ingredient which doctors ordered the patient should avoid.

All the hospitals, either public or private, are headed by doctors, many doctors though not academically trained in hospital administration, nevertheless, they are very able administrators consider the time they devote to administrative work after practice medicine. Doctors in our hospitals are well-trained and wellmotivated, despite low salaries, they are striving their best to catch up with the progress of modern medicine. Without such spirit, no amount of material improvement would be sufficient. Most of the senior medical staff in our hospital received some kind of training abroad, the level of medical care in our hospitals generally can be considered above the average of those in this area. However, there is much room for improvement in administrative aspect, lack of trained personnel resulted the administrative function plays a secondary role in local hospitals. It is true without doctors to practice medicine, any hospitals can not exist. But it is more true without patients, a hospital would has no reason to exist. As the per capita income has been increasing with the economic development, people demand better services - hospital care is just one of them.

Now I would like to explain the impact of health insurance on hospitals in Taipei. The hospital fee though much lower than those of other countries, still it is a big burden to a person who is not covered by any kind of health insurance. The average length of hospital stay is about 12 days in medical ward, the total cost is about NT\$3,400.00 or US\$85.00. The insurance compaies only started not long ago in Taiwan, therefore, the health insurance programs are still not available. We do not have a Blue Cross or a Blue Shield kinds of nonprofit organizations. We do have two kinds of medical care programs, one belong to Labor Insurance Program, the other is Government Employees Insurance Program. Both programs covering the "Blue-collar" workers of industry and government, the "White-collar" workers of the government, educational institutions and public enterprises respectively. At the end of 1967, the Labor Insurance Program contracted 2,910 hospital beds in Taipei, and 137,230 insured persons were in Taipei. The Government Employees Insurance Program contracted 1,081 beds in 32 hospitals at the end of 1968, sam- time, a total of 82,453 persons was covered in this program. These two insurance programs are two most important programs in our social welfare policy. The main work force of our society no longer worry about the extra medical expenses.

These programs also set up certain minimum standard, thus hospitals must either

reach such a standard or not accepted as designated hospitals. Many improvements in private hospitals can be directly attributed to the requirements of hospital set up by these two programs. When the facilities of private hospitals gradually improved which in turn stimulate some public hospitals to follow suit. Among 82,453 government employees covered by Government Employees Insurance Program in 1968, 21,181 persons made 43,120 visits to seek medical consultations. Besides these medical benefit under these two insurance programs mentioned, the Municipal Government sets aside a special fund for medical care expenses for poor people under the Department of Social Affairs. In 1969, 2,120 patients who were classified as poor people spent 325,170 patient days, on the other hand, 69,225 visits were made by poor people in the same period, these cost the government NT\$18,673,013 or about US\$468,000.

The private practitioners or their clinics also play a very important role in medical care of Taipei City. It is estimated about 50% patients visit clinics operated by private practitioners. The "Closed-type" of medical staff in hospitals divided the doctors into two groups. The doctors in private practice earn much more financially but lack of modern diagnostic facilities they have to refer more complicated cases to hospital, in the long run, they progress slowly professionally, if any progress at all. This is one of the main reason why our doctors in the United States want to practice medicine there, because they feel only a few years after their return, they will professionally lag behind. The doctors in hospitals, especially, larger hospitals, earn much less but they see more patients and become specialized in the disease of certain physiological system, professionally they are more experienced. This in turn pose a question. What is a "specialist"? The position of "resident" in many hospitals just refers a grade, not in the sense of resident in certain field. Our teaching hospitals do provide residency programs, but can we correctly assume all those who completed the residency program be classified as "specialist"? This is a very difficult question. I can not give an answer. But before a board examination is set up to screen all the candidates, those who completed the residency program in a teaching hospital should be at least be regarded as de facto specialist.

The responsibility of a teaching hospitals should expend to help private practitioners professionally. If the door can be opened a little, private practitioners in turn can be better clinicians thus the ultimate benefactors are the people in entire Taipei.

The Pharmaceutical industry though not very large scale, but they are quite few in numbers. There were 102 pharmaceutical factories at the end of 1967, 54 of them make drugs and 48 make herb medicine. Many large U. S. pharmaceutical firms have packing factories in Taiwan, while Japanese pharmaceutical firms certainly have been very active in Taiwan. Imported drugs also include those from Switzerland, Italy, West Germany and England. In the municipal hospitals, among the drugs purchased, about 30% were imported and 70% made locally. In many hospitals in Taipei, drugs are not included in either hospital bill or doctors' bill, patients must buy the drugs by cash.

At the end of 1968, there were a total of 1,699 drugstores in Taipei, 1082 of them handle drugs and 617 of them handle herb medicine. At the same time only 714 pharmacists were registered. It is apparent many drugstores do not have a single pharmacist on duty all the time. It is also necessary to point out that the herb medicine is more expensive than drugs of Western type of medicine. Many kinds of herb medicine must be imported and among the herb medicine some can be used in Chinese food, especially in the preparation of delicious dishes. The self-medication or taking medicine without professional guidance is common in Taipei. There are two reasons, first the drugs can be advertised in every kind of communication media, newspapers, magazines, television and movie. Oftentimes people are captive audience and learn the claim of indication faithfully, if or when, such indication does occur, it is only logic to take the medicine. The second reason is the drugs in drugstore do not divide into those can be had without prescription and those can be bought must have prescription. It is very easy to buy any kind of drugs as long as a person can afford. For minor illness, self-medication can bring no harm, but those with serious illness only showing minor symptoms, self-medication can be very dangerous.

The Taipei Municipal Health Department budgeted NT\$73,370,060 (equivalent to US\$1,832,000) in 1969. This amount represented 2.69% of total budget of Taipei Municipal Government in that year. The main function of Health Department is public health, however, the medical care through two levels also a part of the important work. There are 16 districts in Taipei City, the population and area of these districts varies from 33,714 persons in Chingmei District to 217,148 persons in Chungshan Districts, from 0.7597 square kilometer of Chien-chen District to 64.5450 square kilometers of Shihlin District. The population density of these districts also varies from the lowest 1,261 persons per square kilometer in Ne-hu District to 75,913 persons in Chien-chen District. There is one health station in each district. The health station provides clinical care and other public health works in this district. The Family Planning work has been added into one of the main tasks. The higher level consists of 7 municipal hospitals with 571 beds. Several more hospitals; a T.B. center, a cancer center, an emergency hospital are in the construction stage, besides, expansion projects in the existing hospitals are now underway. At present about 1 hospital bed for every 386 persons, this ratio will be changed to 1 hospital bed for every 273 persons at the completion of projects mentioned above.

Among these new hospitals under construction, the most urgently needed is the emergency hospital which will have 300 beds. The economic prosperity washed out the peticabs and bicycles as the main transportation, instead motorcycles and automobiles appeared in increasing numbers. When many vehicles of different speed use the same street, accidents are bound to happen. Somehow all the emergency cases concentrated into two hospitals. Among 85,161 emergency cases visited 15 hospitals in 1969, 48,433 cases were treated in one teaching hospital and one missionary hospital. These emer-

gency cases created a serious problem to the hospitals, instead of merely providing emergency first-aid, the emergency service gradually changed into a small hospital, because, admission into hospital proper has always been difficult, these emergency cases had no place to go. In view of such situation, the Municipal Health Department is giving the first priority to the construction of an emergency hospital.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Due to the progress of public health, the people live longer nowadays, the proportion of elderly people has been increasing. Take care of the illness of elderly people is one of the main problem of public health. The elder generation of Chinese people are physically stronger because they lived through a hard life in their youth. They can more easily adapt to any adverse circumstance. Moreover, the elderly people is the head of their clan, highly respected by the younger generation. The opinion expressed by elderly people represents wisdom and authority. The younger generation is obligated to take care of the elder generation, consequently, many elderly people rather not go to the hospital but prefer to stay home when they become sick - some fear the hospital is the place of no return - and let doctors visit them. Our health stations send out doctors and nurses to see these elderly patients very often which compensate the shortage of hospital bed and also reduce the financial burden of the family as well as the society. The bed ratio thus cannot accurately reflects the need of hospital service unless all the factors influencing the requirements are considered.
2. The prenatal care is very important for health of the mother and the child. In the past the prenatal examination was not widely accepted, now it becomes more popular. For people in Taipei, not only prenatal examination is free of charge, but also those who have been examined regularly can enjoy the privilege of free hospital delivery and staying 3 days in hospital free. This kind of service is now available in both public and private hospitals.
3. Although the medical and hospital charges are low when compared with those of other countries, still, it is impossible for poor people to bear. All the poor people who registered with the municipal government can get free outpatient and in-patient care in municipal hospitals.
4. For social diseases like tuberculosis and venereal diseases, the municipal government operates a TB center and a VD center. Their laboratories examine specimens free of charges, including those submitted from other public and private hospitals, clinics, etc. Free treatment is given to those who require medical attention, including in-patient care.
5. Both veterans and military hospitals provide out and in-patient care to civilian population. The experienced military clinicians and modern facilities in these installations are taking care of significant portion of patient load in Taipei. Although we do not have the social medicine system like that of the Great Britain, but the medical and

hospital charges are low and we have a plenty of medical personnel. Most government employees participate Government Employees Health Insurance Program, while labors are under Labor Health Insurance Program. The bed ratio per thousand people may appears low, still poor people enjoy free medical care, elderly people enjoy free home care, delivery with 3 days hospital stay is free, therefore, even though the overall health insurance program has not yet started, but in effect, such program already existed, because our family system provides mutual help and mutual care, thus patients do not necessarily go to the hospital, they can get the same care in home which in turn reduces the hospital bed requirement. The home care typical in Taipei also reduces the social burden, patients get treatment from doctors making outcalls and more rapid recovery usually assured for they still live in the surrounding familiar to them and enjoy the warmth of family consolation which already disappeared in the highly industrialized developed countries.

6. Admittedly, hospitals in Taipei, either in bed capacity or in physical plant is somewhat behind those in Western countries. Our hospitals are not like institution, though highly efficient, but cold in human relation. Many countries respect human on their productivity, but we respect human on their age. The family system of our society can take the place of national health insurance, not only patients under home care, but also patients in hospital receive the family care any time and all the time, this gives much comfort to the patients. Since most of people grew up under more adverse circumstance we have stronger adaptability, the warmth of family care either in home under doctor's care or in hospital provides much psychological comfort to patients which is not available to patients in well-run, highly efficient hospitals elsewhere.

Finally I wish to point out the report I just made is entirely based upon my own observation which does not represent the official statement from either the Taipei Municipal Government or Taipei Municipal Health Department.

Thank you.

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