

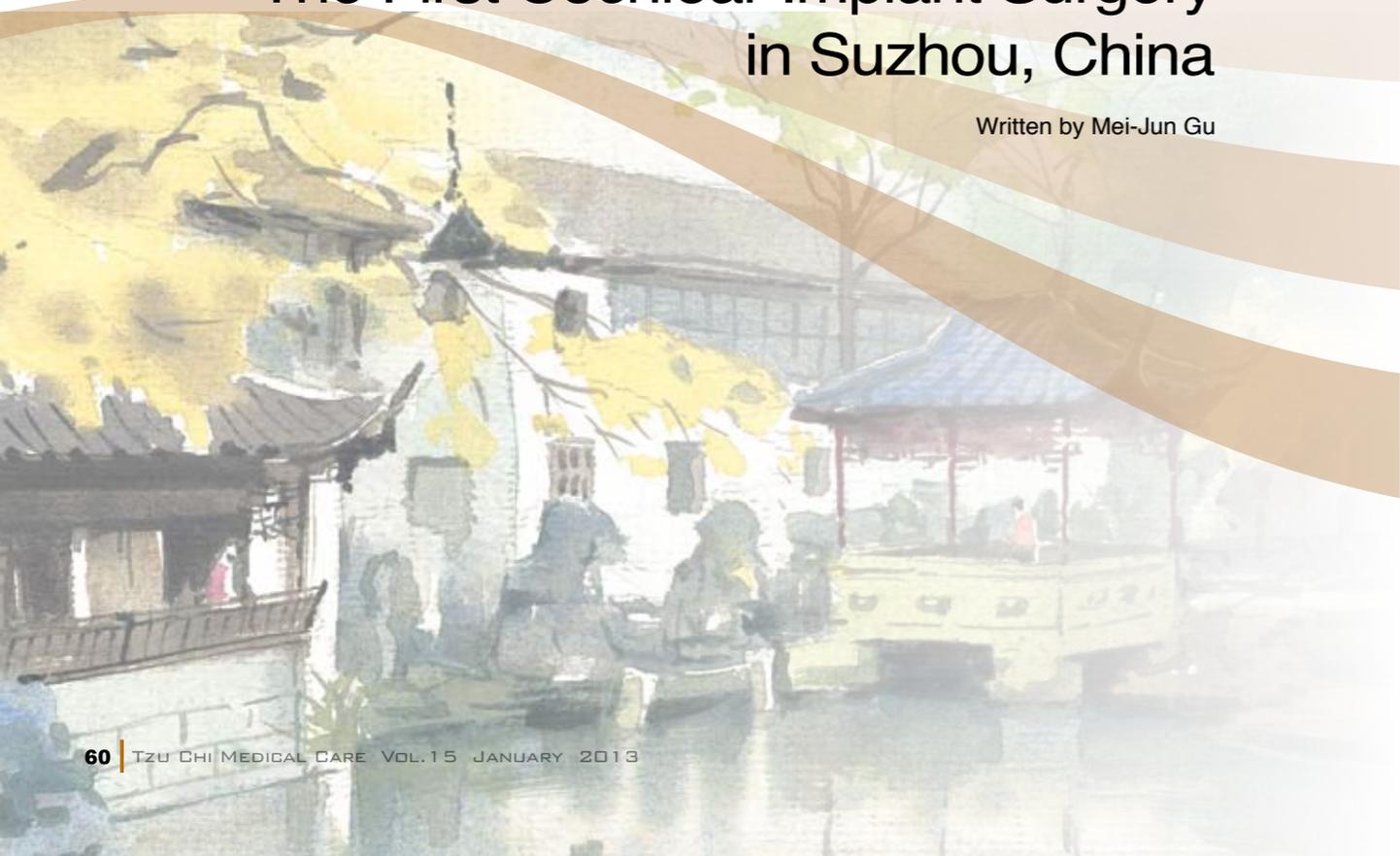


Special Report 2

Hear the World of Love

The First Cochlear Implant Surgery in Suzhou, China

Written by Mei-Jun Gu



*The ravens are calling upon the moon descending under the frosty white sky.
The lights on fishing boats illuminating the river and the bridges,
I lie awake in reminiscence.*

*And outside the Gusu city, with Hanshan Temple in the background,
Chimes at midnight can be heard in the distant.*

<Mooring by Maple Bridge at Night > Ji Zhang, Tang Dynasty.

This quatrain poem describes the homesickness of travelers in the ancient City of Suzhou. In the present world, however, while everyone is asleep at two o'clock in the morning, Fu-Miao Wang, who lives beside Changqiao People's Hospital in Suzhou City's Wuzhong district, is already on his motorcycle heading towards the wholesale produce market. Rain or shine, each morning, he rides for more than half an hour to pick up produce from the wholesaler and transport them with a rental truck to his booth in the market. The whole family works hard to raise money for his son, Xin-Hua Wang, who suffers with congenital auditory nerves disease, in order to pay his medical expenses.

Parental Love Above All Obstacles

At eighteen-months old, Xin-Hua was diagnosed with congenital hearing impairment. Since then, his father, Fu Miao Wang and mother, Jin Liu have tried to save every penny, including moving to a smaller apartment, to pay for his



Farmers market is already brightly lit before dawn. Mao-Fu Wang sources from here every day to supply his business and support his family.



The Wang family spends up to ten plus hours in the booth everyday. When his parents are busy, Xin-Hua squats on the side obediently.

medical treatment. Xin-Hua's condition required cochlear implant at a steep cost of two hundred thousands RMB. Since Suzhou Disabled Persons Federation and the Ministry of Health offered only sixty thousand RMB financial assistance, the family had to come up with the balance of the payment. The couple figured that with their monthly income of three thousand RMB, it would take ten years to accumulate the surgery cost, while their son may miss the optimum operable window. A neighbor even suggested Wang to give Xin-Hua up for adoption in light of the astronomical medical expense. In the eyes of the parents, Xin-Hua is a smart and clever child despite his hearing disability. It would break their hearts to give him away. Wang said, "It's too much of a shame to deny this child the medical treatment he needs. Back then, people

told me to give him away, but I said no, I said I want to raise this child; this child is too unfortunate..."

Wang Fu Miao and Liu Jin tirelessly sought for assistance from Good Samaritans. This family of three, living by Changqiao People's Hospital, had never dreamed of a free clinic set up by doctors from Taiwan right next to their house. On December 24, 2010, Tzu Chi offered its first cross-strait collaboration free clinic in Suzhou, right at the Changqiao People's Hospital in Wuzhong district. Hundreds of healthcare professionals from Tzu Chi International Medical Association(TIMA), Tzu Chi Foundation Medical Mission, Changqiao People's Hospital, The First and Second Affiliated Hospital of Suzhou University, and Suzhou University Affiliated Children's Hospitals (or Suzhou Children's Hospital) all participated in this event

At the end of 2010, Tzu Chi held free clinics in Changqiao Hospital in Suzhou, China, allowing many local working class children the much-needed medical examinations.



Chief Dr. Hung-Pin Wu(second left) and Dr. Yi-Fan Chou(first left) carefully inspect surgery instruments before surgery.



Before surgery, Taichung Tzu Chi General Hospital Ophthalmology Chief Hung-Pin Wu(middle), Chief Residency Dr. Chou(right), and Suzhou Children's Hospital Ophthalmology Chief Xuen-Wu Dou (left) review Xin-Hua's file and exchange ideas.

to provide services in Internal, Surgical, Obstetrics and gynecology, Pediatrics, Eastern, Dental, Ophthalmology, and Otolaryngology medicine. Xin-Hua's

parents went to the free clinic and met with Dr. Chang-Peng Chen from Hualien Tzu Chi General Hospital with a hope of getting treatment for their child. After reviewing Dr. Chen's report, Otolaryngology Chief Hung-Pin Wu of Taichung Tzu Chi General Hospital and former president Ming-Hwang Shyr of Hualien Tzu Chi General Hospital were eager to provide surgery to Xin-Hua to restore his hearing and bring this karmic connection to a positive closure.

Timely Operation Brings Hope and a Potential Bright Future

In the six months following the free clinic, Tzu Chi Foundation Medical Mission and Suzhou Ministry of Health had discussed and decided that the first

cochlear implant surgery in Suzhou would be performed by a collaborative team of doctors from the Tzu Chi General Hospital and Suzhou Children's Hospital. When date of surgery was confirmed, the Tzu



Taichung Tzu Chi General Hospital Ophthalmology Chief performs the first Suzhou cochlear implant surgery and introduces related technology to the local hospitals.



During surgery, Tzu Chi volunteer, Xin Yu Li (middle), hugs Xin-Hua's mother Jin Liu(right) to calm her anxiety.

Chi Foundation Medical Mission Chief Executive Officer Chin-Lon Lin and former hospital president Ming-Hwang Shyr traveled in the rain to deliver the much-anticipated news to Xin-Hua's parents. Executive Officer Lin stated that the best time to have cochlear implant surgery is before two years of age. Lin said, "With the implant, Xin-Hua can sense not only sound volume but more importantly sound frequency. The ability to hearing different sound, such as his own voice and words, will allow Xin-Hua to learn and speak. This is very important as the learning process slows down tremendously after the age of two." At 18 months, Xin-Hua was ideal for the surgery. After the implant and with some training, he can learn to hear and speak like a normal child.

Tzu Chi members' effort and dedication in preparing for the surgery touched the hearts of many regional manufacturers and business owners. As a result, MED-EL from Austria decided to donate the cochlear implant system for this surgery. It is the most advanced system currently available. It can transform daily sounds into coded electric pulses that stimulate nerve fibers inside the cochlear. The auditory nerves then send the messages to the auditory processing center of the brain where messages are translated into sound. In addition, all the necessary surgical equipment were shipped from Taiwan, Shen Yang, and

Shanghai to Children's Hospital of Suzhou since no prior surgery was ever performed in Suzhou and not even a microscope could be found in the otolaryngology department. The surgical tool company from Taiwan worried about clearing the custom, but everything went surprisingly well. Representative Zhi-Yuan You from An Jie Instruments stated that Tzu Chi had always focus on relieving agony and suffering, and that it was a rare chance to learn from Tzu Chi and show one's gratitude by contributing to a good cause.

Surgery with Skills and Humanistic Culture

Two days before surgery, chief surgeon Wu from Taichung Tzu Chi General Hospital and his assistant Dr. Yi-Fan Chou arrived at Suzhou Children's Hospital. Together with the hospital Otolaryngology Chief Xuen-Wu Dou, they inspected the instruments and tested the systems in the operating room. On June 24, the day of surgery, reporters from Suzhou Broadcasting Station, Suzhou Daily, Yantse Evening Post, City Post, Nanjin City Press, and Suzhou Online waited outside the operating room for surgeons from Tzu Chi. To Suzhou residents, cochlear implant is a foreign concept. Dr. Hung-Pin Wu, with eight years of cochlear implant surgery experience, answered all of the reporters'



Xin-Hua's parents Jin Liu(left) and Fu-Mao Wang(right) with the just discharged Xin-Hua in their arms expressing gratitude towards Tzu Chi.



Suzhou local reporters interview former president of Hualien Tzu Chi General Hospital Ming-Huang Shyr(first right) and learn about Tzu Chi's medical charity work.

questions, such as whether or not Xin-Hua would hear like a normal person; what kinds of risks were involved, and if there would be side effects. Moreover, the media's attention was attracted on this event leading up to Xin-Hua's first contact with Tzu Chi and how medical organizations across the strait facilitated

Suzhou's first cochlear implantation. Former president of Hualien Tzu Chi General Hospital reflected back to the free clinic event of 2010 and commented that a case like Xin-Hua would usually be ignored by the society. However, Tzu Chi, under the guidance of Venerable Master Cheng Yen, had reached corners of the society to relieve and alleviate sufferings. After learning about Tzu Chi's medical culture, the local reporters all praised the compassion of Tzu Chi's great doctors.

When it was time for surgery, Xin-Hua's mother Jin Liu handed him over to the anesthesiologist in dismay. Out of the warm arms of his mother, Xin-Hua immediately started to cry. At this moment, Tzu Chi Volunteer Xin-Yu Li comforted the mother with a big hug. Xin-Hua's father was also filled with mixed emotions and was in tears. He was accompanied by another volunteer, Zong-Ming Lin, during the entire process. After a two-hour surgery, Chief Surgeon Wu expressed that the unique aspect of the procedure was that it united many people's efforts and strengths. In Taiwan, the surgery could be performed by one hospital, but in Suzhou, the surgery was accomplished by efforts between Children's Hospital, Tzu Chi volunteers, and the instrument manufactures.

The rate of congenital hearing impairment is about one-thousandth in newborns. That is, one out of every one

thousand children could be born into a world of silence. Suzhou Children's Hospital Otolaryngology Department Chief Dr. Dou stated that based on both residential and non-residential populations there were close to one hundred local cases of congenital hearing impairment. If cochlear implant surgery could be performed in Suzhou, it would reduce time spent on travel for treatment. Chief Dou also commented, "Through many people's effort, we have accomplished a good deed. The Children's Hospital is the first Suzhou hospital to perform this surgery and we also learned much through the process in addition to human love and compassion."

As a gesture of appreciation to Tzu Chi, the president of Children's Hospital waived the surgery charges wherever possible. He also looked forward to future teaching demonstration by doctors from the Tzu Chi General Hospital.

Welcoming the World of Sound and Learning

After three weeks of recovery, on July 16, Xin-Hua's electronic cochlear was officially "switched on". From that day and on, Xin-Hua hears sound in this world. His mother Jin Liu said with tears that if it were not for the help of Tzu Chi, her child, perhaps for his entire life, would not be able to hear nor call her "mama". She said



Tzu Chi Foundation Medical Mission CEO Dr. Chin-Lon Lin (left) makes a special trip to Suzhou to visit Xin-Hua. He tends to Xin-Hua's condition and examines his healing progress.

that when Xin-Hua is older she would tell him that it is because Tzu Chi and many good-hearted people that he is able to grow up like other healthy kids. She will teach him to be thankful and contribute to the society in return. The father's biggest wish is for Xin-Hua to become a doctor and help families like themselves in need of doctors from Tzu Chi.

On July 24, Tzu Chi Foundation Medical Mission CEO Dr. Chin-Lon Lin made a special trip to Suzhou to visit Xin-Hua. He tended to Xin-Hua's conditions and examined his healing progress. Everyone who cared for Xin-Hua look forward to his response to sound, much like parents' anticipation of the words papa and mama from their child. In the future, Tzu Chi General Hospital will develop concrete plans of collaboration with Suzhou Children's Hospital, including cross training and educational seminars. This not only aims to improve local medical technology but also more importantly to instill the concept of humanistic medical care culture, unleash Tzu Chi's spirit of "humanistic medicine and respect for lives."