

COMMUNICATIONS**Five Days of Magic at Asia's Camp for Burn Patients in Taiwan**

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Received: 15 Dec 2011 • Revised: 23 Dec 2011 • Accepted: 28 Dec 2011

pISSN: 2234-6163 • eISSN: 2234-6171

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5999/aps.2012.39.1.89> • Arch Plast Surg 2012;39:89-90

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“Do you have a girl friend?”

“No, I don't have one. I'm such an outsider.”

Last winter, Ji-Hun (false name) fell asleep, unburdening himself of his cold answer to an anesthesiologist's question before surgery. The major six hour surgery was successful and he endured two more difficult weeks of ongoing treatment well. Ji-Hun was a strong child.

Ji-Hun is a child with scars all over his body because of a burn accident when he was young. For growing children, burn scars mean much more than simply an ugly-looking appearance. As the child grows up, the skin also has to develop. However, in a case where a child has large scars, the skin does not stretch or expand but instead remains firm and pulls the body out of place, eventually disturbing normal growth. Ji-Hun's case was the same. His body was already smaller than other children of his age. The surgery Ji-Hun received to some degree freed his body from the scars he had had before. However, it seemed that even the operation could not relieve his mind, compressing in on himself as an outsider. As I observed the child following that pattern of thought, I felt a pressure in my chest. However, I knew superficial comfort could only hurt him more. I had no choice but to become more careful. The staring eyes the child had to bear could inflict a wound in the child's heart deeper than that of a knife. Even until the end of his stay at the hospital, I never found a smile on his face.

Six months after that, I met Ji-Hun again at the Incheon International Airport. Ji-Hun was one of the five children who had come to participate in the Asia Burn Camp held in Taiwan. At that time, I was joining them as a guide. The three children who had participated in the camp before were quite excited because of their expectations to meet new friends, but Ji-Hun, who was participating for the first time, was neither chattering nor smiling. Ji-Hun's mother followed him to the departure gate, worried because Ji-Hun had never left his

mother before. The other child who was attending the burn camp for the first time seemed to be afraid like Ji-Hun.

Fortunately, right after we arrived in Taiwan, the two adapted themselves to the new circumstances well, alleviating my worries. While Sang-Min, Hwa-Jin, and Soo-Jung (all false names), the three who had been to Taiwan before, talked knowingly of Taiwan to the others and guided them around the camp, the eldest among them, Joo-Sung (false name) showed his responsibility as the eldest to take care of the younger ones despite it being his first time visiting Taiwan.

In the midst of all this activity, Ji-Hun remained silent; nevertheless, I could see him opening his mind step by step, sometimes smiling at his friends' jokes.

The Asian Burn Camp in Taiwan was having its 16th gathering. It is a big festival where 200 children with burns and their chaperones from not only Korea but also Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Canada, and the other countries participate. It was the fourth time Korea had sent representatives to join the camp. The year's theme of the camp, held at the Toucheng Leisure Farm in the Northeast of Taiwan Yilan, was magic. Professional magicians performed and the children had opportunities to learn magic tricks in person. Moreover, during the five days of the camp, there were a variety of programs such as art, music, creative acting, swimming, and team activities. The goal of the burn camp is bringing back children's spirit and confidence through these activities. Like a magical transformation, the camp achieved change within the children's mind in a way that a surgical procedure never could.

The children, who had never revealed their scars at all in front of other people before, took off their clothes while playing in the water and confidently revealed their bodies in front of the other people at the camp. Sang-Min, who said he had never taken off his hat even at home because of his burn scars on his face and head, was talking with his friends without his hat. Joo-Sung and some Taiwanese campers also took off their hats and hung out with the others, looking at Sang-Min. Sang-Min said that he was greatly shocked and encouraged to see another new friend cheerfully hanging out with the others and eating rice through a straw despite having more serious burns than Sang-Min.

Hwa-Jin, who had participated at the world burn camp before, naturally developed the dream of volunteering at the burn camp. She also said that in order to accomplish that goal, she had been studying English and Chinese quite intensively. She took the initiative to care for her team member, Ji-Hun, translating between the Korean and Chinese campers to alleviate the frustration of the participants who could not freely communicate due to language barriers. This time, Ji-Hun did not reject the help from Hwa-Jin. Ji-Hun who was quite shy and not participating in the activities well at first, began to converse with other campers and boasted to the teachers, and before he knew it, he was fully immersed in the camp experience. On our way back home in the airplane, his eyes were shining brightly when he said that he was so proud of himself for staying apart from his mother alone for a whole week.

The extent to which the demeanor of these children changed was shocking for me to observe as I chaperoned them at the camp.

Although I had known before that I should understand my patients' internal injuries, that is, the injuries of their spirits, not just their bodies, I realized that I could not fully understand the true hurt in my patients' minds. Nor did I know how to encourage my patients, even though I had told my patients to be encouraged. However, through this camp, I could closely feel the reality of the deep hurt and the possibility of change. It was literally magic, I realized. The camp thinned children's scars in their minds, and their minds grew to be much more open.

Plastic surgeons can treat scars, and the methods for treating the remaining scars have greatly developed and improved. However, while doctors have concentrated on treating only the outside scars, patients must have endured the scars inside their hearts in solitude.

When one feels that curing the depths of patients' minds is not one's duty, it means that the patients depend on receiving treatment from a person who does not understand their true injury and hurt. In particular, when the treatment is long and boring, this is truly unfortunate.

Through this camp, I saw not only the hurt of patients but also the infinite possibility for recovery and change. From now on, I will have a confident attitude, believing that recovery of the mind is possible through actual changes beyond vague optimism in my treatment process. Being with a doctor who encourages a patient to have hope again must be a great blessing to a patient. Now, when I come back to the hospital after the camp, I have promised myself what I have to do: to be a doctor who encourages a change of mind in a patient as much as a change in the patient's body.

