

CARING FOR JEWISH PATIENTS AND FAMILIES AT ADVOCATE LUTHERAN GENERAL HOSPITAL AND ADVOCATE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

January 2018

*Rabbi Leonard J. Lewy, Staff Chaplain
Park Ridge, Illinois*



Introduction and History

Advocate Lutheran General Hospital (ALGH) and Advocate Children's Hospital (ACH), located on the same campus, has had decades of Jewish Staff Chaplaincy, including Chaplain Rabbi visits with Jewish patients and family members, availability of frozen kosher meals, electric Sabbath candles, some Jewish ritual items, and Jewish holy day celebrations centered on certain units, as well as consented to - Jewish Chaplain referral to patient's own synagogue. Hence, an established foundation of delivery of Jewish services at this hospital campus has been in place, since its first Jewish Chaplain came on scene by the last quarter of the 20th century.

Enhancements Provided Internally and With Outside Partnerships

When its third permanent Jewish Chaplain began serving at ALGH in 2011, he maintained previously instituted Jewish support while conceiving of enhancements and expansions of Jewish religious resources for patients and their families so important for well-being and healing of the spirit, as hospital emphasis is on healing of the body. Some improvements would be accomplished internally with the support of the institution's Mission & Spiritual Care Dept. Others were achieved thru special partnerships with outside organizations.

Kosher Food

Full or partial observance of the Jewish Dietary Laws (Kashrut) are observed by many Jewish patients and their families, as well as staff and volunteers. Frozen kosher meals were the norm in 2011. Family meals were then and are provided at no charge thru Chicago Mitzvah Campaign (CMC) a Jewish community service organization. In response to patient/family suggestions a Committee was formed to explore obtain fresher, more local alternatives, as well as special needs in certain areas of the hospital like the ACH Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). That Committee leased a hospital owned adjacent apartment to CMC which was refurbished as a Kosher Hospitality Suite. This facility provides kosher nourishment and respite (see also under Sabbath). In addition two Orthodox organizations, Chai Lifeline Midwest which eases the burden of pediatric illness and Refuah-311, Division of Chicago Center for Torah and Chessed which supports those dealing with medical challenges invited ALGH to accept a Kosher Pantry, stocking 24/7 available shelf stable kosher food items which was dedicated in March 2015.

Kosher Pantry Dedication



Education, Guides, and Publicity

Education on Kashrut is provided to new members of the Food Service team. For each of the major Jewish Holy Days the Jewish Chaplain describes and reviews food needs associated with the Holy Days.

Each individual unit or Residency year of in-hospital Clinical Pastoral Education (or CPE – internationally recognized chaplaincy training) receives an in-service from the Jewish Chaplain, regarding Ministry to Jewish Patients and Families. Articles and materials are provided following the seminar. This education sensitizes chaplain trainees to the needs of Jewish patients and families.

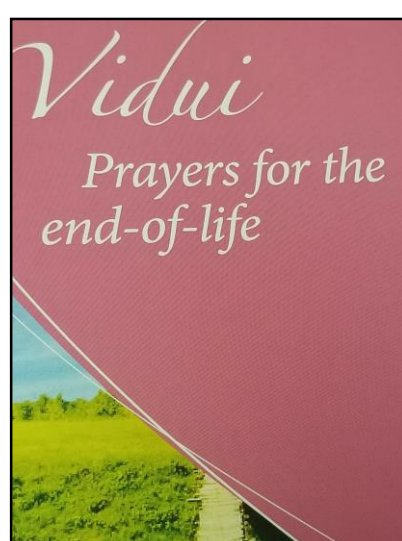
Beginning in 2011 the Jewish Staff Chaplain began circulating information about Jewish Holy Days and observances thru the internal hospital publication, *Momentum*, and its successors, as well as thru Mission and Spiritual Care's *Connections* which is also shared with the Chicago Board of Rabbis. These articles are informational to sensitize staff and volunteers to care needs and services of this population, as well as to publicize special Jewish programs and seasonal foods open to the entire campus community.

Since 2011 by request Jewish Funeral Directors have agreed annually to provide Jewish Calendars provided to patients and families, permitting tracking Holy Day dates and start times of the Sabbath/Holy Days.

In 2014 the Jewish Chaplain began circulating his flyer publication, *Care of the Traditional or Orthodox Jewish Patient: Restrictions, Diet, Religious Decisor, Sabbath, and Holy Days* which guides Traditional Jewish families in ALGH Jewish resources, as well as staff in caring for Orthodox Jewish patients at ALGH.

Ritual Objects

A quantity of Jewish ritual objects have always been available at ALGH, including skull caps (*kippot/yarmulkes*), prayer shawls (*talitot/taleysm*), prayer books (*Siddurim*) and some Jewish Bibles. Since 2011 a large quantity of diverse denominational Siddurim from local synagogues and Jewish Publication Society Bibles were obtained. Relevant to the hospital setting titles of the *LifeLights* series of booklets were purchased, as additional supportive material for patients and family members.



The Jewish Healing Network of Chicago and The Jewish Center for Addiction of Jewish Child and Family Services are ready resources for professional referral at discharge and at Jewish Chaplain request regularly provide copies of *Jewish Prayers and Reflections on Healing*, *Vidui: Prayers for End of Life*, and "Jewish Center for Addiction".

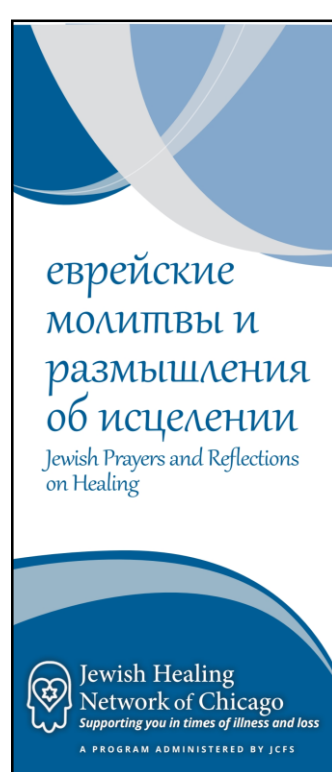
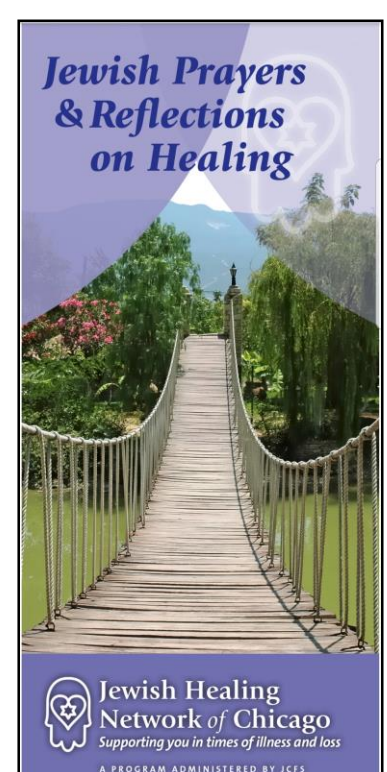
The CMC donated a set of *Tephilin* – phylacteries.

Meeting Needs of Jews from the Former Soviet Union (FSU)

This community has its own special customs and needs. The older generation hospital population often is not fluent in English.

The Jewish Chaplain approached the Jewish Healing Network of JCFS about materials for Soviet Jews which later included him on an editorial committee. The Russian language version of *Jewish Prayers and Reflections on Healing* became available in early 2015 and is well received and meaningful to the FSU patient/family population. Sometimes the Jewish Chaplain utilizes this publication to involve family members in reading passages from *Numbers 6* and *Deuteronomy 6* for patients.

With patient agreement the Jewish Chaplain often requests Rabbi Chaim Lazer Hershkovich from Chabad and F.R.E.E. of Niles to provide Russian (and Yiddish) language visits.



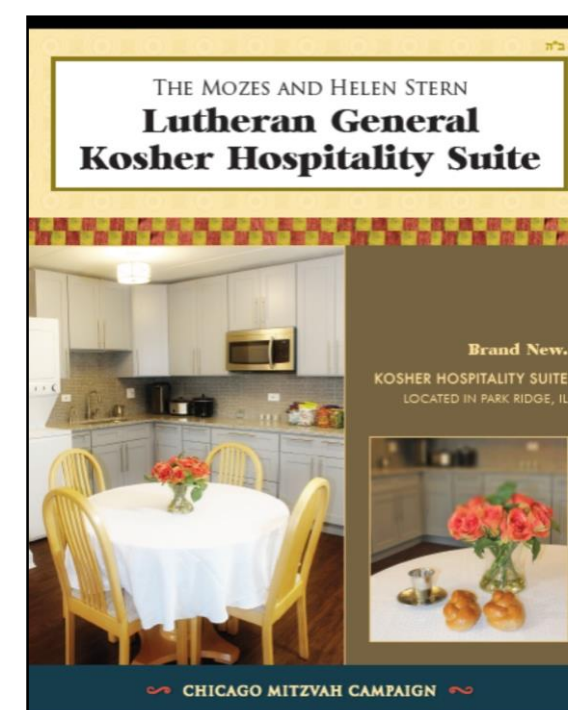
Sabbath and Holy Days

While normally observed at home and in synagogue, giving Jewish patients and family members substantive snippets of Sabbath and/or Holy Day observance, can build in some normality and uplift into a hospital stay.

It is traditional to kindle candles on the eve of the Sabbath and Holy Days. Sufficient sets of electric Sabbath candles are now provided by ALGH that every patient can use these in house and take them at discharge as a gift from the hospital which also satisfies any infection control concerns.

Kosher grape juice and challah rolls (matzah at Passover) from a certified kosher provider (to insure greatest usage) are provided automatically on the Sabbath to each general diet patient. Patients and family members can order these items at other times as well which frequently gives Jewish patients a *lift*.

Often, family members visiting a patient don't live near the hospital; and their beliefs don't permit them to drive or be driven on the Sabbath. The CMC Kosher Hospitality Suite serves his purpose, providing both kosher food and Sabbath/Holy Day accommodations. Home hospitality is available 15" walk from the hospital at Rabbi Chaim Lazer and Rivky Hershkovich. Their synagogue, Chabad and F.R.E.E. of Niles is walking distance from ALGH.



The *Care of the Traditional or Orthodox Jewish Patient* publication referenced above provides information about stairways and non-electric hospital entrances, because using regular elevators and entrances are not used on the Sabbath and Holy Days.

Holy Days

Our outside partners bring in hand written Holy Day greeting cards from children given out by the Jewish Chaplain which touch our patients at whatever time of year.

Some patients and family members, as well as staff and volunteers attend representative Holy Day services 4 times per year for High Holy Days, Sukkot, Chanukah, and Passover which are then also shown in patient rooms and hospital waiting areas throughout these days. These services/programs all serve as staff in-services about the Jewish sacred times. Appropriate rituals are observed and kosher seasonal foods are provided to patient in patient rooms. Many of those food items are also available in the cafeteria as well.

High Holy Days

The Cantor from Beth Hillel Congregation B'nai Emunah has participated with the Jewish Chaplain in providing pre-High Holy Day service screened during the 10 days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Volunteers from BJBE blow the shofar (ram's horn) at this program. Kosher foods made available include round challah bread, apples with honey, and honey cake.

Rabbi Chaim Lazer Hershkovich from Chabad and F.R.E.E. of Niles and/or Chabad students blow the shofar on the 2 days of Rosh Hashanah. A prayer is provided for Jewish patients for those unable to fast on Yom Kippur.



High Holy Days Patient Tray Card

Sukkot / Simchat Torah

The Jewish Chaplain asked if erecting a Sukkah (booth) for Sukkot (The Festival of Booths or Tabernacles) would be possible.

The VP of Mission and Spiritual Care agreed. The structure is set-up each year in the Meditation Garden.

Pre-school students from Congregation B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim (BJBE) create and install decorations in the Sukkah. A program/service is held during the in-between days of Sukkot. Those who wish can say the blessing with the Lulav (palm branch) and Etrog (citron). Patients who will not be attending Simchat Torah services are often brought a Simchat Torah flag by the Jewish Chaplain.



Sukkah Decorating with BJBE students and Parents



Sukkot Ritual with Advance Practice Nurse

Chanukah

While a "minor Holy Day" (because of post-Biblical status) in Judaism, Chanukah is all the more important to patients/families from minority faith/culture, needing to be in the hospital in December. ALGH celebrates this festival of light with over 50 Chanukah Menorahs (candelabra), including 2 very large Menorahs donated by CMC and Chai Lifeline. One of these very large Menorahs is used at a hospital wide candle lighting and singing program with the participation of clergy from Anshe Tikvah and Beth Hillel Congregation Bnai Emunah. This program is screened hospital wide. Kosher food made available include Chanukah chocolate coins, potato pancakes, and jelly donuts. Patients receive a gift of a blue and white Chanukah flower courtesy of the ALGH Service League and Flower Shop.



Large Menorah Donated Through CMC

Purim

Rabbi Chaim Lazer Hershkovich from Chabad and F.R.E.E. of Niles and/or Chabad students read the *Scroll of Esther* on the eve and day of Purim for patients, family members, staff, and volunteers. Kosher *Hamantaschen* (Purim pastry-both in patient rooms and in the cafeteria), noise makers, and Hebrew/English copies of the Book of Esther are made available.

Passover

Kosher for Passover foods are ordered well in advance of Passover. A Model Passover Seder is held before the Holy Day, including required foods. Kosher for Passover Matzah and complete meals are available to the entire hospital community.



Passover Patient Tray Card

Shavuot

For Shavuot (The Festival of Weeks) as per many Jewish traditions special kosher dairy foods are made available to the entire hospital community in patient rooms and in the cafeteria, including cheese blintzes which have become very popular.

Results

It is very possible to normalize and observe many aspects of Jewish life in the hospital setting. Doing so enhances "healing of the spirit." Patients and family members who have benefited from these services have expressed great appreciation. There have been emotional high tears at the live Chanukah program by the daughter of one our patients. A patient from the FSU said that the ALGH Model Passover Seder was the first one that she had ever attended. It was reported that a family shared very gratefully at the patient's funeral that the last High Holy Day service that their family attended was the hospital's pre-High Holy Day service.

Next Steps

Since one of ALGH's buildings is 14 floors high, a *Sabbath Elevator* (which avoids the prohibitions associated with the Sabbath/Holy Days, because it is pre-set before the sacred day to stop on each floor) is being considered as another sign of hospitality for our Traditional Jewish families. Additional measures to provide alternatives/shut offs for motion sensor lighting in some stairwells and automatic toilets are being explored. The hospital committee which has implemented enhancements mentioned here for is planning to highlight the work of our partner organizations and print the flyer publication, *Care of the Traditional or Orthodox Jewish Patient: Restrictions, Diet, Religious Decisor, Sabbath, and Holy Days*.

Special Thanks

To the first Jewish Chaplains at ALGH who provided a great beginning, ALGH Administration and the Mission and Spiritual Care Department for vision and caring for all created in God's image, and to our generous partner organizations.

Also to Debra Jordan, Senior Account Representative, Advocate Media Center for contributing her expertise and time in the technical production of this poster.