

THE JEWISH CHAPLAINCY REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

5770 | 2009-2010



Jewish Chaplaincy
8700 Beverly Blvd., Room 2510
Los Angeles, CA 90048
310.423.5291
www.cedars-sinai.edu



A LETTER FROM RABBI JASON WEINER, JEWISH CHAPLAIN

WITH EVERY PASSING DAY I FEEL MORE and more blessed to have the opportunity to serve as the Jewish Chaplain of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. The profound opportunity to play a small part in our patients' healing is humbling and indescribable, the dedication of our staff is incredible, and the excitement in our Spiritual Care office is unbelievable.

People often ask me if I find it depressing to constantly work with people who are ill and suffering. I am surprised by this question because I find chaplaincy work so meaningful and inspiring. Since this question is asked so often, I have reflected on four reasons why our work in chaplaincy is anything but depressing. First, as the *Talmud* says, *Rov Cholim – Most sick people recover* (Gittin 28a). It is a tremendous feeling to work with people who are not well and watch as they improve and recover. Second, the opportunity to provide assistance to people who need it the most and spend my day performing *Mitzvot* and acts of kindness is indescribably uplifting. Third, although the patients we meet may be physically ill, many of them demonstrate extraordinary emotional health through their willingness to explore their spiritual lives and express their

deepest hopes and fears far more openly than the average "healthy" person. Finally, while it is true that we encounter many very difficult situations, these actually help me

recognize the fragility of life and appreciate the preciousness and importance of every moment of every day.

This year was an exciting and busy year for Cedars-Sinai's Jewish Chaplaincy. Our primary focus remains the spiritual well-being of our patients, their families, and our staff. To that end we are thrilled to have been able to introduce several new programs in the past year.



Rabbi Weiner teaching a class in our new sukkah, where we also provide a lulav, an etrog, and kosher snacks.

HOLIDAYS

It is important to offer strong Jewish programming in the hospital around the holidays. That is why in addition to our annual *Purim megillah* readings, *Chanukah* party, *Yom Ha'Shoah* event, and High Holiday services, this year we added:

- A beautiful new *Sukkah*.
- A *Yizkor* service on *Shavuot* and *Shemini Atzeret*.
- Classes before every Jewish holiday about the themes of the day.
- A new Cedars-Sinai *Machzor* (prayer book) for our High Holiday services, which includes a contemporary English translation and transliteration, as well as clear commentary and instructions.

The dedication of our staff is incredible, and the profound opportunity to play a small part in our patients' healing is humbling and indescribable.

EDUCATION

Our program shares the mission of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center to train and educate, so in addition to my weekly *Torah* class in the Chapel, and our strong volunteer and internship program, this year we added:

- A rabbinic intern from American Jewish University, in addition to continuing to have interns from Hebrew Union College and the Academy for Jewish Religion, which means that we now have interns from all of the three major Los Angeles rabbinic schools.
- A volunteer program allowing *yeshiva* students from Mesivta Birchas Yitzchak to visit patients on Friday afternoons and deliver fresh *challah* and electric *Shabbat* candles.



Dr. Irving Lebovics teaching a monthly Jewish Law & Medicine class.

- A monthly session on topics in Jewish Law & Medicine in partnership with the Center for Health Care Ethics.
- An annual Rabbi Levi Meier, PhD Memorial Lectureship.

INREACH AND OUTREACH

Our chaplaincy program has looked both inward and outward this year as we created a number of programs and partnerships to benefit our patients, staff, and community-at-large:

- We initiated a High Holiday food collection program with SOVA, a grand rounds presentation with Jewish World Watch, and a *Chanukah menorah* distribution with *Bikur Cholim*.



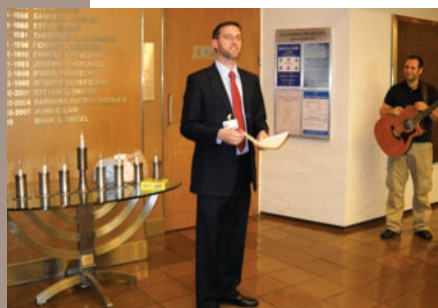
Rabbi Weiner leading a ceremony to inaugurate the construction of what will be the largest building on the Cedars-Sinai campus, the Advanced Health Sciences Pavilion.

- The Kalsman Institute was brought on board to conduct a hospital-wide Spiritual Care Assessment, to help us find ways to improve the job we do.
- During the winter months, we held a daily traditional *mincha minyan* in our Chapel for staff members who need to pray each afternoon.
- I had the privilege of becoming a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Rabbis of Southern California, and as part of our goal of partnering with the local Jewish community, we hosted an Executive Committee meeting at Cedars-Sinai.

We deeply appreciate the contributions of the entire Cedars-Sinai family and the community beyond, with whom we have had the pleasure of partnering in 2010/5770. We are excited about strengthening these bonds and enhancing our programs in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Jason Weiner
Jewish Chaplain
Cedars-Sinai Medical Center



Rabbi Weiner, along with Chaplaincy Intern Noam Katz, leading our annual Chanukah celebration in front of our Chapel.

THE PJ LIBRARY: A HEAD START ON JEWISH IDENTITY

WHY WAIT UNTIL YOUR CHILD IS approaching *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* age to start thinking about Jewish literacy? Why not begin a bit earlier, say at 6 months?

Such an early start is already possible, thanks to Cedars-Sinai's participation in a special program offered through The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles called The PJ (PJ as in pajamas) Library®. The goal of The PJ Library is to help families build, strengthen, and preserve their Jewish identity through stories and song. This

book-gifting program has been so successful that it is now expanding from the five Valleys (Antelope, Conejo, San Fernando, Santa Clarita and Simi) to include families who live on the

city side of Los Angeles. Thanks to the generosity of local funders, The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles will now offer The PJ Library for free to the first 1,800 children ages 6 months to 5 ½ years to register on the city side of Los Angeles on a first-come, first-served basis.

Each child enrolled in The PJ Library receives a monthly gift of a high-quality, age-appropriate Jewish book or CD, as well as a reading guide carefully selected by a team of experts. To date, 131 families of Cedars-Sinai newborns have signed up for the program after receiving a personal invitation from the Medical Center.

For more information on The PJ Library, contact Risa Goldstein at The Jewish Federation at 818-464-2852 or RGoldstein@JewishLA.org.



Persian Jewish Genetics Project: Partnering for Prevention

CEDARS-SINAI HAS INITIATED AN IMPORTANT GENETIC SCREENING program for the local Persian Jewish community, designed by Dr. David Rimoin, Steven Spielberg Family Chair in Pediatrics and the Director of the Cedars-Sinai Medical Genetics Institute. Dr. Rimoin explains “No one group has more mutations [that increase the risk for developing specific conditions] than another. These mutations are simply more easily identifiable—because they are more common—in groups with a strong tradition of intramarriage.”

Couples who plan to have children may want to know whether they both carry particular gene mutations for conditions that can be serious if left unchecked, but are easily treated or prevented once the couples are screened.

Within a few months of the program's launch last summer, 1,000 men and women had already come forward to be screened anonymously and for free – thanks in part to a grant from the Jewish Community Foundation. These screenings were held at Sinai Temple, Nessah Synagogue, Eretz Cultural Center, and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center after a comprehensive outreach effort attracted participants from many sectors of the community. Rabbis and community leaders spoke about the program during *Shabbat* services; Farsi and English brochures were distributed at synagogues and major Los Angeles venues; e-mails were sent out; and electronic social networking was leveraged through Facebook, YouTube, web sites, blogs, and community calendars.

Dr. Rimoin hopes that at least 10,000 of the 50,000 or more Persian Jews in Southern California will be tested through this vital project.

For more information, contact Dr. Rimoin's office at 310-423-4461.

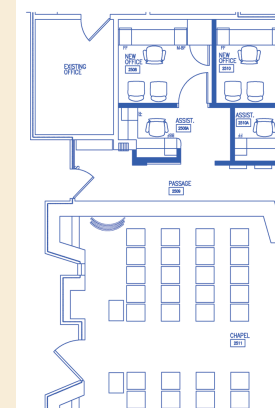


Couples who plan to have children may want to know whether they both carry particular gene mutations for conditions that can be easily treated or prevented once they are screened.

WHAT'S NU?

Sacred Space

The Spiritual Care offices and the Chapel on the Plaza Level of the Medical Center are undergoing extensive remodeling in order to make these spaces more welcoming and efficient. Over the coming months, the space will be reconfigured to accommodate more staff while providing enhanced privacy. New carpeting, cabinets, and furnishings will beautify both the offices and the Chapel. Comfortable seats, in place of the existing pews, will allow the Chapel to be reconfigured for all types of services, classes, and programs. The Chapel has always been at the heart of the Medical Center, both physically and spiritually, and these improvements will provide an even more inviting place for anyone to worship, learn, or meditate. The Chapel is open for all, 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week.



Shalom, Baby

Babies don't come with a set of instructions, but parents often wish they did.

As a complement to Cedars-Sinai's well-known Prenatal Education Classes, the Medical Center is planning a new class to explore Jewish perspectives on welcoming and raising a child.

Through this pilot program, expectant parents will have an opportunity to discuss what it means to be pregnant, welcome a baby, and parent those first few years – all through a Jewish lens. It will explore the Jewish traditions, customs, and values related to becoming a parent and how to connect with local



resources as part of a family's Jewish journey. Questions related to choosing a Hebrew name, the *Brit Milah* (ritual male circumcision) ceremony, welcoming ceremonies for girl babies, how a baby's routines can have a Jewish flavor, and

other issues relevant to expectant parents will be addressed in an open and thoughtful class of peers.

For more information, contact Jewish Chaplaincy at 310-423-5550 or internally at ext. 35550.

30 on Thursday: Spiritual Care for Our Caregivers

Cedars-Sinai is providing an opportunity for our caregivers to take 30 minutes a week for spiritual healing and rejuvenation.

To develop the Medical Center as a place of healing for everyone in the Cedars-Sinai family, the Jewish Chaplaincy team is creating a new forum for reflection, spiritual connection, and personal growth. 30 on Thursday will begin meeting this fall, from noon until 12:30 p.m. every Thursday in the Chapel.



Each session will include moments of reflection, introspection, and the discussion of a unique prayer – focusing on its meaning and implications for our work and our lives – providing an opportunity to find comfort, reassurance, and community.

For more information, call the Chaplaincy office at x35550.

BREAD WITH A TWIST

Buy Challah and Put Bread on Someone Else's Table

Delicious fresh kosher challah will soon be available for purchase every Friday in the street-level cafeteria. Choose between traditional, pretzel, or chocolate chip challah, with all proceeds going to the Cedars-Sinai Employee Emergency Fund. It's like doing something good with your dough.



Visions of Hope

During patient visits, the members of our Jewish Chaplaincy team encounter the full spectrum of human emotions – from despair to euphoria.

WHEN AN ELDERLY HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR was recently rushed to the hospital, she understandably felt isolated and afraid. However, she later explained, “When I saw the Star of David on the side of the hospital building as I was being wheeled in, I felt a little more relaxed and at home.” Then, as she was waiting to be transported to a patient floor, she noticed a sign explaining that there was a special Shabbat elevator. The sight made her feel more at ease, and even a little hopeful. A few moments later, as she was being escorted into her hospital room, she looked up and saw the Mezuzah on the door. She felt uplifted. At that moment, she turned to her nurse and said, “I haven’t seen my doctor yet, but I feel healed already.”



A WOMAN IN DECLINING HEALTH ASKED me to come to her room to discuss end-of-life issues. She and her husband, who sat by her side, proceeded to ask me about Jewish rituals and customs that apply under such circumstances. I described a number of meaningful



traditions, including family members asking for forgiveness from one another for any perceived wrongs ever committed. The elderly husband was silent for a moment, then slowly drew himself up from his chair and stood erect next to his wife’s bed. In a voice filled with emotion, he said, “We have had more than sixty years of a loving and devoted marriage, and I can tell you with all my heart that we have nothing to forgive each other for.” His wife nodded in agreement as her eyes filled with tears. Then, they reached out to one another and silently embraced.



ONE AMAZING PATIENT I MET BEGAN TO tell me about her difficult treatment for a blocked artery. “Thank God!” she added. I was surprised that she would be so thankful for an illness. When I probed further, I discovered that she was grateful for her heart condition because during her hospitalization, a blood test revealed that she also had an early stage cancer. While this is not traditionally regarded as good news, she was overwhelmingly thankful that her cancer had been found early on, when it was still treatable.

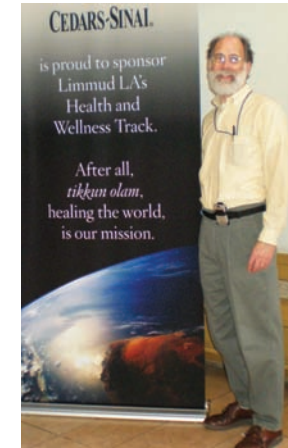
She is the first person I ever met who was grateful for heart disease and she taught me a profound lesson.



RECENTLY, A MIDDLE-AGED PATIENT shared that she was staying with a relative who was in poor health. She explained that her relative was, however, holding up well because she was a CPA. When I looked confused at why simply being a CPA would help anyone deal with this situation, she explained that a CPA is someone who is “Constantly Practicing Appreciation.” She continued, “With that approach to life, a person can get through anything.”

JEWISH COMMUNAL LEARNING: 2010 LIMMUDLA

CEDARS-SINAI WAS PROUD TO SPONSOR the Health and Wellness track at the 2010 LimmudLA annual conference. Rabbi Jason Weiner, Stuart Finder, PhD, Director of the Center for Healthcare Ethics at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, and Dr. Lindi Vanderwalde were among the presenters from Cedars-Sinai. This successful event attracted over 700 people from the Los Angeles area and beyond, who explored Jewish texts, arts, practice, culture, beliefs, and philosophy from traditional to progressive and everything in between. Topics explored included a joint session by Rabbi Weiner and Dr. Finder titled *Secular vs. Jewish*



Medical Ethics: Different or Not? The primary texts and case studies they presented elicited many questions and comments and sparked lively discussions among the participants.

EXPANDED JEWISH COMMUNITY OUTREACH

CEDARS-SINAI’S TRADITION OF SERVICE to the community will expand even further this year as it reaches out to additional synagogues and Jewish organizations throughout the city with new health and wellness programs. Under the direction of Logan Williams, the Department of Community Health and Education has selected four sites to pilot this expanded partnership, including Temple Beth Am, Young Israel of Century City, Wilshire Boulevard Temple, and Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles. The program will offer lectures on nutrition, caring for the elderly, advance directives, safe medication practices, health promotion, and health education. Adult and child immunization services will also be provided.

INFORMATION FOR JEWISH PATIENTS AND VISITORS TO CEDARS-SINAI MEDICAL CENTER

As part of our commitment to the Jewish community, we are pleased to offer:

- Electric Shabbat candles
- Mezuzot on all doorways
- A library of Jewish books and ritual items such as Tefillin
- Kosher food is in the Employee Cafeteria and the Plaza Café. Patients are offered a kosher meal plan, featuring fresh food cooked in our kosher kitchen, certified by the Rabbinical Council of California.
- The Shabbat elevators (#13, North Tower and #38, Saperstein) that stop at every floor of the Medical Center on Shabbat and Jewish holidays.

The following television programs may be viewed in patient rooms on Channel 19:

- “Healing Through Jewish Songs and Stories” at 1:45 and 2:30 p.m. daily.
- Shabbat services – every Friday at 3:30 p.m.
- Havdalah (end of Sabbath) services – every Saturday night at 9:00 p.m.
- Rabbi Weiner’s Study Session – broadcast live from our Chapel – every Tuesday at noon.

Ask for Jewish Chaplaincy at 310-423-5550 or internally at ext. 35550.