
THE JEWISH CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM OF MILWAUKEE
Rabbi Leonard J. Lewy, Director
945 North 12th Street – P.O. Box 342
Milwaukee, WI 53201 - 0342
Telephone 414-219-6070 Fax 414-219-7818
E-Mail info@milwaukeejewish.org Web Site www.milwaukeejewish.org

A program of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation in cooperation with the Jewish Family Services.

Basic Information on Caring for Jewish Patients and Families

Providing for the Spiritual and Religious needs of Jewish Patients and their families is not unlike caring for other ethnic and religious groups with some very important exceptions. Judaism mandates its own special requirements for its Sabbath and Holy Days, its diet, and life cycle customs. While an active listening pastoral style should be welcomed by most Jewish patients and their families, some will prefer to be visited exclusively or additionally by a Jewish Chaplain, Rabbi or Cantor. Jewish Chaplains usually have CPE training as well as special knowledge of Jewish tradition. Rabbis are usually ordained in a lengthy post college process of five to six years. Cantors sing the liturgy in synagogue but also often play a role in visiting the sick among their synagogue members.

Additional information is available through the Jewish Chaplaincy Program, including its Holy Day memos that include bibliography and web sites.

Below, please find several terms and sample assessment questions that you should ask Jewish patients and family members. Please note that Jewish Chaplaincy and the patient's own rabbi will be making routine and emergency visits as well -- usually without your frequency of access. Jewish Chaplaincy's mission mandates its giving priority support to the unaffiliated Jewish community.

- **Synagogue Affiliation**

Are you a member of a synagogue (or are you still a member of synagogue... if this information is available on the census)?

Have clergy from your synagogue visited? If the answer is no, would you like me to request such a visit?

- **Prayer**

If you chose to offer a prayer for a Jewish family, (not of all of whom will feel comfortable with a non-Jewish chaplain), please be aware that Jews do not pray in the name of Jesus nor are they as comfortable or used to spontaneous prayer as other faith groups. You might inquire as to whether a prayer would be comfortable. A Prayer / Biblical section that many Jews are familiar with is that found in Numbers 6:24-27 (Jewish Publication Society, 1985). Jewish teaching on modesty will preclude some very traditional Jews from accepting handshakes from those of the opposite sex.

- **Kosher Food**
An inquiry should be made as to whether a patient is receiving or would like to receive kosher food. If the answer were yes, he/she would like to receive it; the Food Service department should be contacted.

- **Sabbath and Holy Day Candles**
These items are generally available through Pastoral Care or Jewish Chaplaincy (and can be purchased from Rosenblums—800-626-6536) and should be offered to a patient or family member Thursday or Friday afternoon and on the eve of Jewish Holy Days*. Typically Jews light actual wax candles at home; however, in the hospital a concession is made to the realities of hospital life. Therefore, electric candelabra are substituted. These are the property of either Jewish Chaplaincy or the hospital itself and the patient should be told something like: *these candles are provided for hospital use only and will be picked up to be used for other patients.*

- **Grape Juice and Challah**
If a patient indicates on the hospital census that they are Jewish, these items should be automatically delivered to a patient's room Friday night at dinner and Saturday at lunch (diet permitting). However, if you happen to be in the room at one of these times and the patient does not have them, you can inquire as to whether they would still like them. Then, please call the diet office to see if that can still be arranged. Please note that ritual items and diet play a major role in providing spiritual and religious meaning for Jews who accept these traditions. Therefore, your assistance in these matters absolutely facilitates significant spiritual care for Jewish patients and their families.

- **End of Life Care**
If it comes to your attention that a Jewish patient is likely to die, please take guidance from family wishes. If appropriate, you may wish to raise the area of funeral arrangements with the family. Some may prefer not to do so. It may be advisable to inquire again as to whether the family's own Rabbi might be contacted. If there is a request or as appropriate, the Jewish Chaplain assigned to the hospital should be paged. It should be noted that on the Sabbath and Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, Simchat Torah, Passover and Shavuot, Holy Days*, the Jewish Chaplain or Jewish clergy's ability's to respond may be limited by the religious requirements of these Holy Days. Please do not page or expect Jewish Chaplaincy or Jewish clergy involvement on the Sabbath or Holy Days for routine, non-emergency matters.

Your concern for all patients under your care is greatly appreciated. If you have further questions, please contact Jewish Chaplaincy. When in doubt, please page the Jewish Chaplain.