



# Celebrating 25 Years of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation at 25:  
Looking Back, Looking Forward



Hopefully this year-long Jewish Chronicle series, marking the Foundation's 25th anniversary, has sparked community pride for the care and creativity with which the legacy of Montefiore Hospital has lived on. We are proud of our accomplishments over these past 25 years.

Perhaps laying out a blueprint for 25 years is impossible. As Nancy Rackoff, JHF Board Chair (2015-2017) remarks, "Health care is changing and our needs are changing, and how we address those needs is changing. You have to be nimble—able to determine new trends and directions to decide where to focus. This is where JHF is strongest."

President and CEO Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, agrees, concluding: "I actually don't know where we'll be in five years. It's not our style to make long-range strategic plans. Our signature is to be opportunistic, ambitious, and aspirational. We'll do something unique, putting the needs of consumers first. No matter what, we will always prepare the next generation of healthcare leaders."

But five years is a reasonable horizon for laying out emerging needs. And so we conclude this history by highlighting a few of JHF's current priorities.

## A New Paradigm for Seniors

More than 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 each day, and they are dramatically re-shaping aging just like they have re-

shaped culture, technology, and family life. Responding to the preferences and needs of this generation will require a new paradigm—more options that support both independence and meaningful community engagement and connection.

JHF is creating a new senior agenda to address the fact that too many seniors needlessly experience what could be their golden years—whether well or frail—in isolation. Social isolation and loneliness are clearly linked to poor health outcomes, including mortality, dementia, and higher hospital readmission rates. Social engagement is not a nice-to-have feature of senior life.

JHF is engaging the community in a range of planning experiences to enhance the quality of life for seniors and their caregivers—from exercise and outdoor activities, to redesigning primary care to be geriatric and dementia-friendly, to exploring new housing options, to technology-supported solutions, such as a Virtual Senior Center that enables meaningful engagement.

## Strengthening the Adolescent Behavioral Health Safety Net

Behavioral health issues among adolescents constitute a public health crisis. Nationally, 21% of 13-to-18 year-olds experience a seriously debilitating mental disorder, and 46% experience a mental disorder. Yet, less than half receive mental health treatment when needed and even fewer receive treatment for substance abuse. Most of us

know a troubled adolescent.

JHF is convening a community dialogue with mental health and other professionals as well as those who have first-hand, family experience with adolescent behavioral health conditions. JHF's long-term goals are to lower attempted suicides and increase access to quality outpatient care in Allegheny County.

## Activating Healthcare Leaders

Health care has been immune to the redesign that has made other complex systems highly reliable, safe, and efficient. This has resulted in high costs, unconscionable rates of medical error, inefficiency, and poor overall population health (the U.S. consistently lags behind peer countries on most indicators of public health). There are many reasons—from healthcare professionals who don't receive training in basic quality engineering, to the increasing complexity of medicine, to perverse financial incentives that can result in overtreatment and inappropriate treatment.

JHF will continue to equip healthcare professionals at all career stages with the quality improvement training, policy knowledge, and teamwork skills to become advocates and leaders. These efforts include the JHF Feinstein Fellowships for multidisciplinary graduate students (Salk, Patient Safety, and Death & Dying), and the new Health Activist Network, an online hub for all reform-minded

health professionals.

## Thank you, from JHF

No matter what the next 25 years bring, they will be shaped by a deep, Montefiore-inspired vision, as expressed in the beautiful quilt created by Louise Silk for the Foundation years ago hanging at the office entrance. The inscription calls on each of us to "find the courage to make our lives a blessing." As Dr. Feinstein sums it up, "We, as individuals with a penchant for justice, must actively seek to advance better health and health care, taking responsibility for creating together the world in which we want to live."

The entire JHF staff expresses its appreciation to the wonderful partners—funders, policy makers, and inspired community members—who believed that we could realize our aspirations. Thank you also to the grantees who verified our confidence.

Most importantly, thank you to the talented and insightful JHF Board members—and the incredible Board Chairs—who have supported the Foundation, the Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative, and Health Careers Futures as we tackled thorny problems with oversized ambitions and risky engagements.

And finally, thank you to the founders, and the Pittsburgh Jewish community more widely, who made so many wise decisions, creating a solid infrastructure on which we could build.



JHF's 2016 Patient Safety Fellows. There are more than 800 alumni of JHF's multidisciplinary fellowship programs, which focus on healthcare quality improvement, patient safety, and systems redesign.