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JHF leaders talk health care issues at Korean conference

by Lee Chottiner, Executive Editor

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*Nancy Zions and Karen Feinstein in Kamakura, Japan.
(Jewish Healthcare Foundation photo)*

Two Jewish Healthcare Foundation leaders recently traveled to the Far East, where they traded opinions and knowledge on a range of health care issues, including perfecting patient care.

JHF President and CEO Karen Feinstein was a guest speaker and panelist at the 2012 Korea Healthcare Conference in Seoul, South Korea, this past October, which drew health care stakeholders from around the globe. JHF Chief Programming Officer Nancy Zions also attended the conference.

Feinstein delivered lectures titled Lean Quality Improvement for Total Hospital Performance Excellence and Exploring the Versatility of the Lean Quality Improvement.

Lean is a type of quality improvement methodology that has been implemented in many industries. Its principles and practices also have been applied to health care organizations with success.

Feinstein's first lecture addressed issues of patient care perfection, including infections transmissions in hospitals, safety and efficiency in lab services and pharmacies and the accuracy of paper smear sampling, to name a few.

The second lecture went beyond correcting problems in hospital settings to making systemwide changes and improvements.

Feinstein also joined a six-person panel at the close of the conference that discussed the challenges of creating "collaborative ecosystems for health care transformations."

"This topic was ideal to us," Feinstein said, noting the Pittsburgh Regional Health

Initiative (PRHI) is just that — a collaborative health ecosystem.

PRHI provides clinicians and institutions with the training and tools to dramatically improve patient safety and health care quality through reductions in medical errors, use of evidence-based practices and elimination of waste.

Feinstein and Zionts were invited to the conference after a delegation of Korean health care professionals visited Pittsburgh earlier this year. The delegates were aware of the JHF's work thanks to a book about the foundation, which had been translated into Korean.

Feinstein and Zionts said they were impressed by how carefully international health care systems follow what's being done in the United States, especially with regard to the Affordable Care Act.

They also appreciated how many European countries, as well as Israel, have a great sense of "financial effectiveness" for their own health care systems.

"They really get better population health for half of what we pay," Feinstein said.

On a side trip to Tokyo, Zionts visited St. Lukes International Hospital where she exchanged information about end of life issues and how they're treated in Japan versus the United States.

"We know that part of the world is ahead of us on the aging curve," Zionts said, "and if we can learn from them, I thought that would be an interesting thing to do."

She noted how Japanese hospital systems emphasize families speaking about end of life. "They have just made that a priority," she said. "They have taken the same exact advance planning forms we have in this country and they have enhanced them — signed by patient, doctor and family member."

(Lee Chottiner can be reached at leec@thejewishchronicle.net.)

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