



An event for caregivers of Holocaust Survivors

Featured Speakers:

Barbara E. Paris M.C

Kristen Mallen LMSW

Cooking Demonstration:

Victoria Dwek

November 26th 2019

6:30 p.m. prompt

Keser Tzvi Hall

212 Wilson Street

A night of inspiration and entertainment!



The Jewish Federations
OF NORTH AMERICA
Center for Advancing Holocaust Survivor Care

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HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

BARBARA E. PARIS, MD

VICE CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF GERIATRICS

MAIMONIDES MEDICAL CENTER

KRISTEN MALLON, LMSW

SOCIAL WORKER

DIVISION OF GERIATRICS

MAIMONIDES MEDICAL CENTER

SURVIVORS TODAY

- There are approximately 13,000 Holocaust survivors living in Brooklyn.
- By 2020, the youngest survivor will be 75 years of age.
- Physical health and mental health are both declining in aging survivors.
- Family caregivers are “second generation survivors”, characterized by specific emotional issues related to the trauma of their parents.

KEY MEDICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES

- Multiple chronic medical illnesses – heart disease, strokes, arthritis, diabetes, cancer, impaired mobility, dementia, constipation, weight loss, urine incontinence, skin breakdown, eating disorders, and more.
- Multiple doctors leading to uncoordinated care.
- Multiple medications with side effects often outweighing benefits.
- Psychological issues – insomnia, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and loneliness.

FALLS

- Physical causes: poor vision, poor hearing, poor balance, arthritis, strokes, osteoporosis, dizziness, shifts in blood pressure, weakness and more.
- External causes: uneven floors, area rugs, slippery floors, ill-fitting shoes, poor lighting, cluttered pathway, incorrect assistive devices, low chairs and toilets, stepping in and out of the bathtub.
- Even without injury – patients can develop “fear of falling syndrome”.

FALL PREVENTION

- Tell your doctor about every fall – this can help prevent future falls by identifying the cause and reviewing medications.
- Exercise and physical therapy – for both upper and lower extremities, balance and muscle strengthening.
- Review the home environment – safe flooring, remove clutter, good lighting, grab bars, hand rails, raised seats, proper footwear.
- Make sure vitamin D level, vision, hearing, blood pressure in multiple positions and foot health are checked by a health care provider.
- Get treatment for osteoporosis.
- Have a health care provider assess the need for an assistive walking device.

MEDICATIONS

- Medicines interact with each other and dosages often need to be adjusted as we age.
- All over-the-counter medicines and health food store supplements **INTERACT** with your prescription medications and can be harmful.
- Your primary care provider should see **ALL** the pill bottles including prescription, over-the-counter and other supplements. Always notify your primary care provider if another doctor prescribes a medication.
- Never use someone else's medicine – what helps your neighbor may be harmful to you.
- Recommended immunizations: Influenza, Prevnar 13; Pneumovax 23; TDAP (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis) and Shingrex (series of 2 injections).

EATING PROBLEMS

- Being overweight and underweight both affect physical well-being.
- Illnesses including strokes, Parkinson's disease and dementia can result in swallowing problems and aspiration. Learning proper ways to eat, and how to feed patients, is key in preventing aspiration. Feeding tubes do not prevent aspiration.
- Assure regular dental checkups, proper fitting dentures and check for loose teeth and bridges.
- Eating can be a trigger for Holocaust survivors.

BOWEL AND BLADDER PROBLEMS

- Constipation is common and related to decreased mobility, diet, medications and illness. Patients can present with decreased appetite, stomach aches and agitation.
- Bowel movement patterns vary – but not having a bowel movement for more than 3 days should be reported to the doctor.
- Urinary incontinence has many causes that should be addressed with the doctor. It is not considered “normal aging”.
- Skin should be kept free of urine and stool at all times to prevent skin breakdown.

SLEEP HYGIENE

- Difficulty with sleep is common among the elderly and particularly Holocaust survivors who may suffer from post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression.
- Causes of poor sleep include medical illness, pain, medications, dementia, caffeine and alcohol use.
- Sleep Hygiene: stable bed time in quiet comfortable room; no reading or television in bed; limit fluids in the evening and no alcohol or caffeine.
- Daytime “rest” should be in a lit space, preferably not in the bedroom.
- Avoid sleeping pills. Can try melatonin.

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

- Elie Wiesel: “time does not heal all wounds: some remain painfully open.”
- Occurs after exposure to traumatic experiences; starvation, torture, brutality, murder, dehumanization, loss, fear, mental & physical suffering, homelessness and more.
- Has a lifelong effect on the individual, their families and subsequent generations.
- Anxiety and depression stem from survivor guilt, panic, paranoia, flashbacks, nightmares and a sense of isolation.
- Nutritional deprivation, prolonged cold exposure, medical experiments and more have lifelong effects on physical and mental health.

CARING FOR THE DEMENTIA PATIENT

- Over time, dementia patients can develop poor judgement, personality changes, and difficulty with self-care.
- Dementia patients may become fearful, unable to express themselves verbally and can physically lash out, yell and hit to protect themselves.
- Avoid confrontation – don't force timed activities or embarrass someone by pointing out he/she is forgetful.
- Keep stimulated – drawing, reminiscing, visitors, day programs, card games, etc.
- Massage and touch therapy can be more helpful than medications in calming agitated and aggressive patients.
- Resources: CaringKind, Alzheimer's Foundation.

CARING FOR THE CAREGIVER

- Recognize that you are second generation survivor and therefore are also susceptible to PTSD.
- Many children of survivors have a very strong sense of obligation to their parents and may take on a sense of guilt for their parent's past traumas.
- Caregivers are also "the sandwich generation" caring for elderly parents, children and grandchildren while working.
- Recognize Burnout Syndrome and seek assistance from other family members, community agencies and support groups.
- Taking time to maintain your physical and mental health will make you a better caregiver.

TIPS FOR KEEPING SENIORS SAFE AT HOME

Barbara E. Paris, MD
Kristen Mallon, LMSW
Division of Geriatrics, Maimonides Medical Center

Important Topics

- Fall prevention
- Tracking medication
- Managing illness
- Awareness of abuse and crime
- Caregiver needs

Falls

Multiple causes include poor balance, arthritis, poor vision, weakness, osteoporosis, dizziness, medical illness, ill-fitting shoes and incorrect assistive devices

How to make home environment safer

- Remove all clutter and area rugs
- Have good lighting in rooms, hallways and night-lights
- Stairways should have handrails
- Chairs should have cushions and armrests
- Remove everyday items from high or difficult to reach shelves
- Phones should be within easy reach and have answering machines
- Consider a personal emergency response system
- Wear properly fitting shoes or slippers – do not walk around in socks or stockings

Bathroom Safety

- Bathtub with mat or nonskid strips and foam rubber tub faucet cover
- Bath chair with back and armrests
- Washable wall-to-wall bathroom carpeting
- Raised toilet seat with armrests
- Waterproof phone and medical alert button
- Grab bars near toilet and shower

Prevention Tips

- Exercise
- Tai Chi and other balance programs
- Low heeled well fitting, soft soled shoes
- Proper assistive devices
- Sit for 20 minutes after a heavy meal and when getting out of bed

Prevent Medication Errors

- One health care provider responsible for knowing all the patient's medications
- One accurate up-to-date list of medications and over-the-counter vitamins and supplements
- One pharmacy
- Be aware that one medicine can have several different names
- Over-the-counter medications, vitamin and herbal supplements may dangerously interact with prescription medications and should be reviewed with your doctor
- Never use another person's medications

Take Care of Health Issues

- Regular check-ups, not just when feeling sick
- Healthy food choices
- Regular exams for vision, hearing and teeth
- Vaccines – flu, pneumonia, tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, and shingles

Hearing Loss

- Have the doctor check for earwax periodically
- Do not use Q-tips or try to clean the inner ear
- Special amplified phones and doorbell that include flashing lights
- Speak clearly and face the person. No need to yell

Hypothermia (too cold)

- Body temperature can be easily lowered causing hypothermia
- Signs of hypothermia include: shivering, body temperature below 96 degrees, confusion, excessive sleepiness, shallow breathing, and weakness
- Home thermostat should be no lower than 68-70 degrees
- Seek assistance if you have financial difficulty paying the heating bill
- Wear layered clothing and have extra blankets

Hyperthermia (too hot)

- Signs include confusion and dry skin, headache and nausea
- Drinks liquids
- Keep rooms ventilated
- Go to air conditioned community centers
- Seek assistance if you have financial difficulty obtaining an air conditioner

Prevention Strategies for Bed Sores

- Change body position frequently
- Keep skin clean and well lubricated
- Manage fecal and urinary incontinence with protective creams and frequent changes of underclothes

Elder Mistreatment

- Mistreatment is often not intentional but can occur because of caregiver stress or lack of understanding of the needs of the older person
- Confused and depressed patients may suffer from self-neglect
- Most people will not tell you that they are being mistreated – you need to ask and be hyper-vigilant
- Be aware of mood changes, becoming withdrawn or fearful
- Be sure to speak to the older person alone and visit frequently
- Be wary of scam mail and other unsolicited offers for help

Sleep Disorders Tips

- Patients with dementia may develop irregular sleeping patterns
- Pain, difficulty breathing, frequent urination are common reasons for disrupted sleep
- The bedroom should only be used at night for sleep
- Eliminate caffeine products and chocolate in the evening
- Limit liquid intake after dinner
- Wait at least one hour after dinner before going to bed

General Home Safety Tips

- Keep lists of phone numbers of neighbors, super-intendants, ambulance, doctors
- Keep list of allergies
- Keep thermometer and Tylenol in the home
- Have a backup plan when main family caregiver out of town
- Keep extra keys with a neighbor or superintendent
- Have smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguisher

Tips for the Caregiver

- Take care of yourself
- Do not be ashamed to ask for help
- Use community resources to support you
- Respite programs, community centers, transportation and Meals on Wheels for the patient
- Caregiver support groups
- Know that you are doing the best job that you can do!

Resources

- Caring Kind – Dementia Resource/Support for Caregivers
Tel #: 646-744-2900
www.caringkindnyc.org
- Alzheimer's Association – Dementia Resource
Tel #: 800-272-3900
www.alznyc.org
- Bikur Cholin – Support for Holocaust Survivors
Tel #: 718-438-2020
www.bicco.org
- OHEL – Social/Emotional Resource
Tel #: 800-603-OHEL (6435)
www.ohelfamily.org
- Self Help – Support for Holocaust Survivors
Tel #: 212-971-7600
www.selfhelp.net
- JASA – Support for the Elderly (including meals programs)
Tel #: 212-273-5272
www.jasa.org
- Access-a-Ride – Transportation Service for the Elderly
Tel #: 877-337-2017
<https://access.nyc.gov/programs/access-a-ride>
- Adult Protective Services (APS) – Elder Abuse Hotline
Main office #: 212-630-1853
Brooklyn Borough Office #: 718-722-4830 and 718-722-4812
<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/adult-protective-services.page>