

[Community Calendar](#)

[Jewish Social Services](#)

[The Center for Jewish Education](#)

[Community Directory Home](#)

[Jewish Life](#)

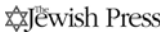
[Volunteering / Advocacy](#)

[Career Center](#)

[News](#)

Blumkin Home nurses: up to the challenge

andrea bartman



They all have the same thing to say when asked the question; "What type of person does it take to be a nurse these days?" The answer is unanimously, "flexibility."

"We're still looking for people with caring and compassion. The kind of person that is required in these positions hasn't changed in 25 years," says Darlene Golbitz, Charge Nurse at the Rose Blumkin Jewish Home.

Natalie Osborne, Nursing Manager, adds to these comments by describing how today's nurses are required to take into consideration the expectations of the state, their management and family members besides tending to the physical needs of their patients.

So flexibility remains number one. But what has changed and what are the new challenges and opportunities to the nurses at the RBJH today?



First and foremost, says Osborne, is that "We've had to become more skilled than twenty years ago. We do a lot more IV's, tracheotomy tubes, etc. We're now more specialized in wound care. These are some things that are new within the last several years."

These new expectations are common place for today's long-term care nursing staff. "People aren't staying in hospitals. Insurance companies are taking people out of the hospitals, but they can't go home yet, so they come here, to the skilled nursing unit," she adds.

Osborne describes an atmosphere of cooperation among staff, social workers and the families of residents that benefits the residents greatly.

"The community has become extremely knowledgeable, which is good," she says. People are no longer in the dark as to how their loved one is being cared for. This creates a positive change for the resident, and presents a challenge to nursing staff to increase their knowledge base and hone their communication skills so they may effectively partner with family members regarding their loved one's care. This is an opportunity for

today's long-term care nurses to use their interpersonal skills in a way that was less utilized in nursing home of the past.

Of course, the RBJH has always held itself to the highest standards of care due to a heightened commitment by the community to the care of the Jewish elderly. The nursing homes of the past, described by Golbitz and Osborne were never an accurate depiction of the Blumkin Home. Restraints, both physical and chemical, were not a method used here, as in many other nursing homes.

Here, with so many people living longer, techniques have changed and adapted to new concerns. Creativity in long-term care has increased. One place that creativity is a cornerstone is in the care of residents with dementia or Alzheimer's.

Today, it is estimated that five million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's. Millions more suffer from other forms of dementia. Without a cure, it is estimated that by 2050, 15 million Americans will have Alzheimer's.

The new RBJH building will include a Special Care Unit for those residents suffering from dementia. Golbitz will be heading up this wing of the new Home as Charge Nurse. She details the ongoing training she seeks out and then applies it to the education of the entire nursing staff. She's recently attended the Alzheimer's Association annual convention and describes her research into obtaining her CDP training (Certified Dementia Practitioner). Once she's attended these types of continuing education opportunities, she returns to the RBJH and educates the other nursing staff.

"The staff sensitivity is already there," she says. "We just help them learn how to incorporate new techniques in dealing with these residents. All of the aides here currently have to do a minimum of ten hours of in-service in dementia training. With the introduction of the new Special Care Unit, we're going to be requiring an additional ten hours of this training."

The National Institute on Aging's newsletter, Connections for the Alzheimer's Disease Education and Referral Center, suggests that nurses and other staff employ techniques such as the following in dealing with the disruptive behaviors of dementia patients: touching or hugging them, giving them something to hold onto, showing movies or providing interactive activities such as sing-alongs, distracting them with conversation and engaging them in activities like cooking or crafting.

Obviously, the RBJH is already employing these techniques and more; and their challenge is to maintain a workforce of nurses who appreciate how beneficial these things are in addition to physical care of patients in the dementia wing.

Emily Stohlmann, a student of Bethel University in Minneapolis, is spending some time with the RBJH for practicum over the summer. She describes a chapter in school on "challenging behaviors" for dementia patients and how to handle these situations, but says that it isn't as much of a focus as it probably should be. This reinforces that Golbitz is meeting the challenge by bringing a spirit of ongoing education into the Home. Osborne helps arrange this type of education as well. She's in contact on a regular basis with the staff of other long-term care facilities. She notes, compares and contrasts the differences continually to make sure the nursing staff of the RBJH is on top of their game.



Young nurses like Stohlmann are a valuable resource to the increasingly older population now needing care. Attracting high quality personnel is a challenge in today's long-term facilities, but with attention to positive working environment, staff support, ongoing training and maintaining top of the line equipment, the RBJH is able to attract nursing staff who want to stay. This really benefits the residents in terms of the staff knowledge and personal connections.

Osborne says that the RBJH nurses meet the daily challenges of connecting with the people in their care and that they take it even farther. "We have a lot more nurses now that are more fully understanding of Jewish beliefs and customs and are taking that under consideration when providing care. To see our nurses take an active role in maintaining Jewish customs and traditions is so important. They really learn fast and it makes them feel like part of this family."

According to an article from Nurse Week, author Jose Alaniz says "With half of today's nursing workforce expected to retire within fifteen years, the nursing student -- the nurse of the future, that is -- may not necessarily be a superman/woman, but the challenges to come will certainly require superhuman resources." This makes time spent at the RBJH by students like Stohlmann a unique opportunity to our current staff to show them why the Home is the place to be.

Another opportunity Osborne sees is in attracting more new male nurses to the Home. "One thing that is really positive to me is the number of men who have become nurses. We've got quite a few male staff." This mix provides options for the care of residents in terms of their security and comfort level.

[Internal Mail](#)

Copyright © 2001 - 2009 United Jewish Communities. All Rights Reserved
[Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Use](#)