

COMMUNITY NEWS

Bureau of Sages makes progress with research at Jewish Home

Jewish Home of Eastern Pennsylvania established the Bureau of Sages under the leadership and direction of volunteer Patty Weiner, M.A. in psychology and M.P.H. The Bureau of Sages has been called an innovative model that incorporates the voices of older adults residing in skilled nursing facilities into research. Based upon Weiner's work on the design of the original model at CJE Senior Life in Chicago and the Home's role as the lead resident coach for two years, six JHEP residents, who have turned sages, have been participating in bi-monthly meetings, "sharing experiences, building knowledge, and developing skills for working together to provide voice to the direction, design, and implementation of research on aging." This group vision is to "improve lives for older adults as the result of patient-centered research."

The group recently worked with Dr. Jerry Jacobs, professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. Jacobs earned his Ph.D. in sociology at Harvard in 1983. He has received numerous academic awards and research grants. He was selected as a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University during 2018-2019 academic years.

Jacobs discussed with the sages the possibility of adding technology to their daily lives to see if they felt it could be valuable. Items discussed included smart phones and voice control assistive devices, smart homes,

monitors and sensors, and telehealth communications.

The sages had several examples of how monitors helped them in the past and said they did not feel this would be intrusive. They also said they felt some of these devices could expedite response time in a nursing home and assist the nursing staff. Jacobs discussed the possibility of robotic assistance in the home. The sages did feel human interaction was best.

The sages engaged in a conversation about cost and intrusive devices. However, they did not feel that these devices were intrusive. They did feel they would be overall helpful. The group closed the discussion with a conversation about telehealth. The Jewish Home sages shared with Jacobs that telehealth would allow a person to skip the long waiting times experienced at the doctors. They also felt comfortable getting access to their doctor without risking falls and transportation issues that might not be necessary. Jacobs said he was most appreciative of the feedback from the sages. He stated that his research efforts will be more productive and successful.

Since July, the sages have consulted with three additional groups of researchers. Most recently, the sages had a virtual meeting with Drs. Ann Kolanowski, Marie Boltz and Kimberly Van Haitisma from Penn State University's School of Nursing. The researchers sought the sages' input regarding the best manner to

recruit and retain stake holders' nursing home residents and their families on their current research project, which is evaluating the efficacy of utilizing non-drug intervention approaches with dementia. Specifically, their premise is that by training nurses on non-drug interventions methods to work with these patients will, in turn, experience less behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia, maintain or improve function, have reduced use of psychotropic medication, experience fewer adverse events and have improved quality of life compared to residents whose symptoms are addressed solely with medications. Furthermore, the researchers hypothesize that with improvements with non-drug interventions, treatment facilities will change policies so as to have a greater percentage of residents with behavioral approaches incorporated into their care plans. The researchers acknowledged the input of the sages and identified fairly quickly the ideas from the sages to develop information packets with patients and families.

The Jewish Home will continue to support researchers from local schools – University of Scranton, Penn State and others – and as its reputation becomes better known, the Jewish Home anticipates working with universities and researchers throughout the Northeast. The Home staff feel the program has proven to be "a great success" for its residents. The sages say they have been stimulated and feel most valued.

For more information regarding ongoing activities of the sages, contact Nicole Lipinski, R.N., M.S., A.D.C.-M.S., C.D.P.