

Library's wealth of knowledge is vital to patients' well-being

As John Lennon once sang, "Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans." That, in a nutshell, is how I ended up spending more than 40 years at the Jewish General Hospital in a dream job that I had never originally dreamt of. I've always loved books and the feel of libraries, but a librarian is not something I imagined I'd become.

After earning my B.A. in 1968, I was about to take off for Paris to study French at the Sorbonne, when protesting Sorbonne students began rioting—and there went my plans! So I enrolled in the Master's program in Library Science at McGill University which led, in my second year, to a part-time job at the JGH Medical Library (renamed the Health Sciences Library in the '80s). In 1970, I launched my career at the JGH Lady Davis Institute for Medical Research and, in 1978, became Chief Medical Librarian.

Over the years, most of my contact has been with doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals who come to the Health Sciences Library (Pavilion A, second floor) for trustworthy, timely information. However, I take great satisfaction in knowing that, ultimately, it's the patients who benefit. By supporting scholarship and research—for everyone from the greenest student to the seasoned veteran—our team plays a crucial role in improving the quality of patient care. Through the library's Patient and Family Resource Centre, we are also in direct contact with patients (or their relatives) who need reliable health information. To play such a vital role in a patient's well-being is extremely gratifying.

I've also been fortunate to witness a remarkable evolution. In the pre-digital '70s, everything was manual and time-consuming. To find an article from the medical



Arlene Greenberg

literature, I had to comb through the massive *Index Medicus* for appropriate references. Today, if you know where to look, answers can be pinpointed more quickly. No longer are librarians the only ones capable of locating medical information. Although the staff still depends on us to help navigate a vast array of online databases, journals, books and other resources, we have become educators.

In this role, we provide others with skills to search for themselves, keep up to date and avoid information overload. Since so much data is available online, we go where staffers work and teach them in their own environment. We also attend rounds—for instance, in Surgery or the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit—to better understand their needs and quickly respond to highly specific requests.

Fortunately, not all vestiges of the past have disappeared. During the hospital's 75th anniversary in 2009, the Health Sciences Library launched the Legacy Project to properly catalogue and preserve our rich trove of archival materials. To me, the library still feels like the oasis it always was—a refuge from the hospital's hustle and bustle, where you can browse through newspapers, journals and books on subjects ranging from medicine to Judaica. Above all, it's an essential repository of knowledge, to be navigated with a mouse-click or the turn of a printed page. Either way, I'm proud to be the guide.

Arlene Greenberg
Chief Medical Librarian



Jewish General Hospital

JGH NEWS

Spring 2011

Published by:

SIR MORTIMER B. DAVIS -
JEWISH GENERAL HOSPITAL
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
AND COMMUNICATIONS
communications@jgh.mcgill.ca

President:

Bernard Stotland

Executive Director:

Dr. Hartley Stern

Director of Public Affairs

& Communications:

Glenn J. Nashen

Editor:

Henry Mietkiewicz

Contributors:

Laure-Elise Singer

Mark Shainblum

Stephanie Malley

Pascal Fischer

Francesca Frati

Graphic design:

Christine Lalonde

Translation:

Louise Trépanier

Printer:

Colorama Packaging and Printing

Photography:

JGH Audio-Visual Services

To subscribe, please see page 13

Publications Mail Agreement
#40062499

Return undeliverable mail with Canadian
addresses to:

Jewish General Hospital
3755 Côte Ste-Catherine Road, A-107
Montreal, Quebec H3T 1E2

Tel.: 514-340-8222

jgh.ca

facebook.com/hgj.jgh

twitter.com/hgj_jgh



A McGill University
Teaching Hospital