

# Israel Education Day talk to focus on emigre health

LESLIE KATZ  
Bulletin Staff

Several years ago, Israeli health-care workers noticed a dramatic increase in the request for abortions. Tracing the rise to immigrants from the former Soviet Union, they discovered that a majority of Soviet women turn to abortion as a method of birth control.

Where they came from, "this was obviously a method used as a last resort," says Julie Cwikel, a professor of social work at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, now on sabbatical at U.C. Berkeley.

In a society in which few use condoms, birth control pills or intrauterine devices (IUDs), many women simply lack contraceptive alternatives.

Once that discovery came to light, Cwikel and her colleagues developed a program to educate the immigrants about birth control options. Cwikel will describe that program as part of a lecture on "Changing Health Behaviors Among Populations in Transition," to be delivered Sunday, Feb. 27 at the annual Israel Education Day at U.C. Berkeley, sponsored by 23 Bay Area Jewish organizations.

The contraceptive program is just one example of the way Israel's health-care system has responded to the specific needs

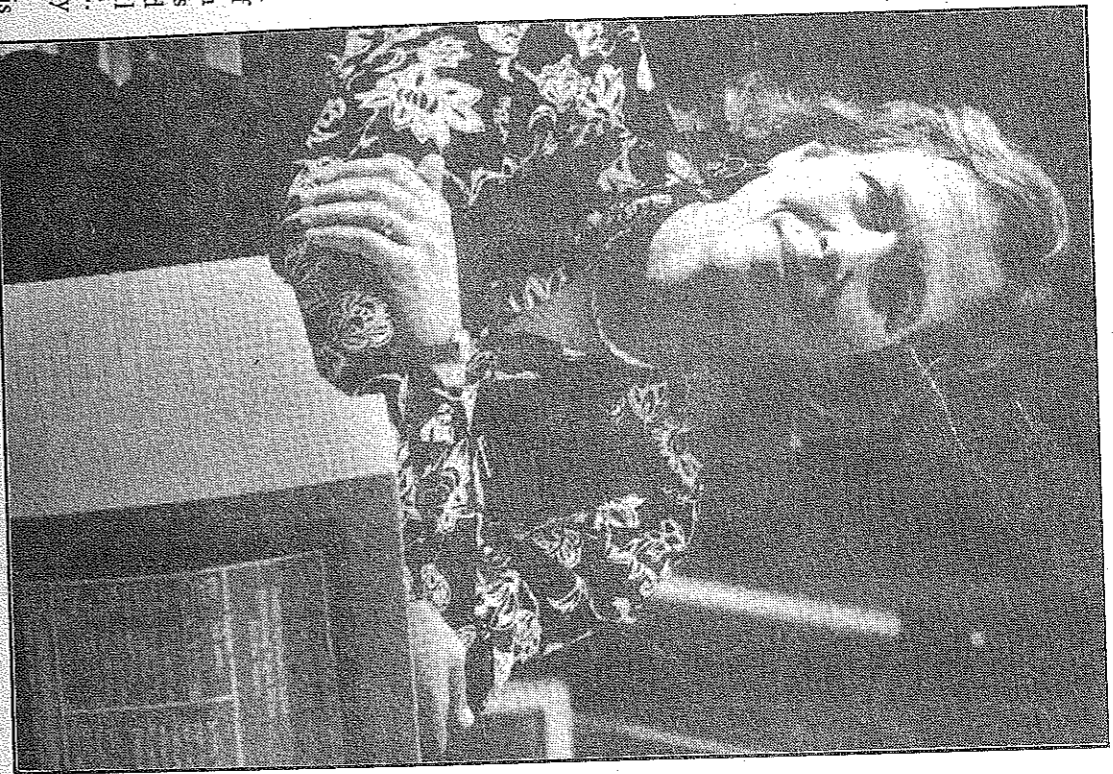


Photo — Phil Heald  
Julie Cwikel has helped new Israel immigrants find their way through a health-care system that's foreign to them.

of Russian and Ethiopian immigrants. These new Israelis come to the Jewish state not only with health problems endemic to their native lands, but with their own health habits and notions about health care.

Ethiopians, for example, bring a strong belief in the traditional medicine practiced by their native country's *zar* healers, who use such methods as herbs, amulets and written inscriptions.

Although a majority of these immigrants encounter modern Israeli medicine shortly after their arrival, many continue to turn to *zar* healers in times of stress, according to Cwikel, who holds a Ph.D. in health behavior and health education from the University of Michigan and currently is writing a book on social epidemiology.

She relays the story of a severely depressed Ethiopian immigrant woman who didn't respond to psychiatric treatment. However, "two sessions with a healer and she was back on her feet," says the social worker, who made *aliyah* in 1976. "He treated her in the context of her family and her extended family."

On the whole, Cwikel says, Israeli health-care workers are making an effort to sensitize themselves to the cultural considerations of their new patients. At the same time they attempt to respect the cultures immigrants bring with them, Israeli health-care workers also try to impart crucial health-related

information to the newcomers. That's where contraception awareness for Russians comes in — or educational efforts aimed at preventing the spread of AIDS among Ethiopians.

Cwikel says the second wave of Ethiopian immigrants, from Operation Solomon in 1991, included people carrying the HIV virus. To stem the virus spread, a group of health-care workers developed an AIDS education program geared to Ethiopians, "without stigmatizing them, bringing too much attention to them or making them feel uncomfortable."

One particularly successful method of disseminating health-related information to Ethiopians has involved the use of health activists, members of the Ethiopian community trained to teach others about health care.

Since the mid-1980s, Israeli physicians, health educators and anthropologists have trained some 65 health activists, and each in turn has taught hundreds of fellow community members about everything from safe sex practices, to the safe use of household appliances and cleaning materials, to what to do when a child gets a fever.

The health activists also help the Ethiopians make themselves understood. "It's a two-way endeavor," Cwikel says. "They also train people working in absorption centers [as well as] health-care providers who don't understand the community's approach to health."

## Program on aging slated Feb. 6 at Beth El

Congregation Beth El and the Berkeley Richmond Jewish Community Center will sponsor a day-long seminar on aging, "Strategies for Aging: an Inter-generational Perspective." It takes place from 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 6 at Congregation Beth

El, 2301 Vine St., Berkeley. Speakers will present workshops on a variety of subjects; the play *Take Care* will be presented by the Stagebridge Theatre Co. prior to the event at 12:30 p.m. For information, call (510) 527-4973.

To advertise in the Jewish Bulletin,  
call (415) 957-9340

**Lehrhaus  
Judaica**

**Northern California's  
largest school for  
Adult Jewish Education**  
Call now for a new  
Winter/Spring catalog  
**(510) 845-6420**  
Reutlinger Center 2736 Bancroft Way, Berkeley

"GREAT IS STUDY  
FOR IT LEADS TO  
LOVE" — AHAD HAAM,

**AGENCY FOR JEWISH  
EDUCATION OF THE  
GREATER EAST BAY**  
510-839-2900

## Welcome Home

### Skilled Nursing Facility and Assisted Living Unit

- ✧ Recreational, social and educational activities
- ✧ Outings to theatres and local events
- ✧ Three Kosher meals daily
- ✧ Assistance with bathing and dressing
- ✧ Laundry and housekeeping services
- ✧ Full time social worker
- ✧ Family support group
- ✧ Synagogue on premises
- ✧ Medication administered and monitored by licensed nursing staff



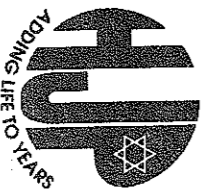
**SPECIAL RATE  
FOR COUPLES**

For information contact  
Diane Flyer Polak  
**(510) 536-4604**  
License No. 011400309

## HOME FOR JEWISH PARENTS

2780 26th Avenue  
Oakland, California 94601

"Add Life to years,  
not just years to Life"



**HAIR CUT CONNECTION**  
(Where behind every chair there is a good woman)

**HAIRCUT \$9 \*PERM \$29\***  
reg. \$10 reg. \$40  
**COLOR \$25\***  
reg. \$30

**20% OFF** Necuss, Sebastian, Masters,  
KMS, Paul Mitchell

**YOUR HAIR IS ON SPECIAL**

\* Longer hair slightly higher  
• Bring us this ad for discount 1816 Euclid Ave • Berkeley • (510) 540-6090