



Cedars-Sinai: The one-hundred year history of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center : 1902-2002

Laurie Levin

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The true spiritual origins of the Cedars-Sinai Health System is God's command to Abraham: "And Be A Blessing" (Genesis: 1 2:2). Abraham established a hospice for the sick and needy under the oak at Hebron and the small terebinth of Beersheba.] Ever since, Jewish communities have built and supported the development of hospitals. Caring for the less fortunate is one of the principles that guide Jewish life. The concept is simple: Those who "have" are morally obligated to provide for those who "have not." This core value, commonly referred to as tzedakah and translated as social justice or righteousness, is as much the responsibility of an individual as it is a communal duty. In the spirit of tzedakah, Los Angeles' diverse Jewish community established two hospitals: Cedars of Lebanon in 1902 and Mt. Sinai in 1918. The two were folded into one with the formation of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. Until now, much of the institution's history has been obscured by time. Virtually all early records and documents were lost when the hospitals physically merged in 1976. Newspaper articles, letters, memoirs, biographical profiles and oral histories have been used to reconstruct the past. Fortunately, this painstaking effort has been rewarded. Cedars-Sinai's long and dramatic story has been restored. Over the course of this century, the institution has served Los Angeles in many ways. Not only has Cedars-Sinai been a place of healing, it has provided for the religious and cultural needs of the Jewish community, offered opportunities to Jewish physicians and medical students when opportunities were scarce, and bettered the world's health through stunning medical contributions and breakthroughs. All this while offering premiere patient care on a non-sectarian basis. For these reasons, Cedars-Sinai Health System stands as a tribute to the vibrant heritage of the Jewish people and every member of our beneficent community that has made its existence possible.

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