

## Jewish Perspectives on Health, Healing and Wholeness

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Historically and theologically, health and healing have always been a part of Jewish communal life. In the United States, the Jewish community organized around individual and community health issues, from early twentieth century immigrant communities dealing with tuberculosis, continuing into the post-World War II absorption of Holocaust survivors, as well as the development of hospitals and social service agencies. More recently, the focus has turned to spiritual support and guidance for those who are ill or struggling with loss. The last twenty years have seen the growth of a wide variety of both synagogue and communal programming that interprets Jewish practices, values, beliefs, and rituals to illuminate how Judaism and Jewish life influence health and quality of life.

This session will provide an introduction to Jewish perspectives on health, illness and healing. We will explore the role of the community in Jewish life, Jewish perspectives on the link between mind, body and spirit, and *mitzvot* (commandments) that relate to health and healing. The session will provide an overview of health-related programming that has developed out of these core beliefs, values and practices. These include Jewish Healing Centers, congregational Caring /*bikkur cholim* (friendly visiting) committees, chaplaincy, congregational nursing, and initiatives on bioethics, health care policy and physician education.