

# Ezra Umarpeh

## Patient Experience Made Better



**W**ho can ease the pain of a mother of a sick baby in an ICU ward? Who can lighten the burden of a family struggling to juggle the needs of their own children at home and an elderly parent in hospital? Who can travel along the path of a disabled young man trying to maintain his identity?

Founded in 1996, Ezra Umarpeh has been at the forefront of patient care, steadfast in its mission to ease the effects of illness and disability. Operating from three branches, they provide a range of targeted support services for patients and their families with a particular emphasis on enhancing the hospital experience and reducing in-patient stays. Services include the free loan of medical equipment, respite rooms in eleven hospitals across London and Manchester, overnight hospital accommodation near the Royal Free and Central London Hospitals, the free hire of accessible transportation vehicles, account facilities with Shabbos Car Services and the free distribution of measured sachets of water for Yom Kippur.

### Hospital Respite

The hospital is a busy place at the best of times, and this can be really overwhelming. For Jewish patient and families, the lack of kosher provisions within the hospital complex presents an additional challenge. Ezra Umarpeh's respite rooms in 12 hospitals across London and Manchester are stocked with hot Shabbos meals, kosher snacks and drinks, *sefarim*, reading materials and warming facilities. They're a source of support, creating a home away from home to at least 110 visitors a week.

"I cannot over-emphasize the value of the service that Ezra Umarpeh provides," says Rabbi Yisroel Fine, Jewish Chaplain at the Barnet Hospital. Recently, the organization has expanded its operations to stock mobile Shabbos units in four more hospitals, including Llan Clwyd Hospital, near Llandudno Mother and Baby home.

At the Royal Free and Central London Hospitals, Ezra Umarpeh provides overnight accommodations, thus allowing family and carers to juggle daily life with hospital duties. After a tiring day on the ward, they can enjoy a good night's sleep within 3-4 minutes from the hospital. Mrs. K. from Hendon recalls, "Our son Shmuel was born at the Royal Free hospital very prematurely and with congenital heart disease. We were very overwhelmed! But there was no time to stop and think and we found ourselves rushing between meetings, referrals and the CICU.

"There was no day or night, and I could really feel that very thick cloud of stress and worry. There were hours when I thought I'd collapse of exhaustion. I felt torn between my desperate desire for a two-hour nap and my need to be right near Shmuel's bedside. I had not known of Ezra Umarpeh before, but believe me, I'm in awe of their work. Their room on the Lower Ground Floor meant I could sit down with a hot cocoa and biscuits and get my mind off things. But more than anything, I was grateful for the overnight accommodation so close to the hospital. There were nights when I could not think of driving home and being worried sick that I'm so far from Baby Shmuel. But that five-star apartment gave me the peace of mind and a good night's sleep. It was a real comfort to know that some people out there were with me during this challenging period."

Shabbos and Yom Tov are particularly busy periods at Ezra Umarpeh offices. During the recent Yamim Tovim, volunteers stocked their rooms with *machzorim*, *simanim*, *shofaros* and *arba minim*, and set up seven sukkahs in hospital rooms or apartments.

Being in a sterile hospital setting over Yom Tov can

be particularly challenging and depressing, and Ezra Umarpeh's Service Coordinators go out of their way to help patients and their families experience the warmth of Yom Tov in these trying times.

### Free Loan of Medical Equipment

Whether for prevention or recovery, Ezra Umarpeh's equipment enables users to have their needs met at home, school, work or play. With warehouses now conveniently located in the heart of the *frum* communities in Stamford Hill, Golders Green and Manchester, they offer a comprehensive range of medical equipment; from small aids such as commodes and humidifiers to larger items such as hoists and electric beds.

Ezra Umarpeh delivers an efficient drop-in service where users can loan any item from the thousands of medical and mobility articles they professionally store and maintain on site. When their offices close at the end of the day, trained volunteers are available to offer an "out-of-hours service" and will open the warehouse for a user during times of medical emergencies at any time of the day or night!

The free loan of medical equipment is extremely instrumental in facilitating a speedy hospital discharge, particularly before Shabbos and Yom Tov and in a climate where the NHS and Social Services struggle to meet their patients' needs.

Mr. Charlie Sheldon, the former Chief Nurse at the Homerton Hospital, enjoys an excellent working relationship with the organization. "We value the continued work of Ezra Umarpeh in providing the free loan of medical equipment. The reliable and efficient service means we can avoid unnecessary hospital stays for patients who are ready to go home but are waiting for equipment."

### Accessible Transportation

Disability can sometimes cause social exclusion. Ezra Umarpeh believes that nobody deserves to be alone and that accessible transportation can make all the difference. Their free-to-use vehicle allows users to be out and about, socialise with friends and families and attend appointments and functions. Where family and carers are unable to self-drive the special wheelchair-accessible vehicles, volunteer drivers are available upon request.

Moishy C. from Tottenham cannot be more grateful for the service. "Having a stroke was a big blow, both physically and emotionally. Ezra Umarpeh's vehicle was the difference between going out and not going out. The volunteers were wonderful and made me feel like a person again."

Whilst this service has been operating in North London and Manchester, Ezra Umarpeh is excited to launch this service to the North West London community. Donated by Family Adler in memory of the late Dr. and Mrs. S. Adler, the brand new Volkswagon Caddy is a fitting tribute to the unforgettable Dr. Adler, who travelled the roads late at night to bring health and hope to his patients. The vehicle has been adapted to accommodate one wheelchair user and an additional four passengers and is sure to help the disabled get out and about in privacy and comfort.

### Shabbos Car Service

Medical crises are always overwhelming and these

situations are exacerbated when they require emergency Shabbos travel, often to and from hospitals. Ezra Umarpeh has set up special account facilities with local car services in London and Manchester. Users need only dial the dedicated number, and can minimize *chillul Shabbos* in the knowledge that a reliable driver will carry their belongings and not request payment (which the user makes to Ezra Umarpeh after Shabbos).

### Sharing the Caring

For families of patients in hospital in Manchester, Ezra Umarpeh offers carers respite and support by providing trained, registered volunteers who remain at the bedside of the patient during the day, overnight and over Shabbos. The service is a lifesaver for those who want a familiar Jewish face at the patient's bedside all the time.

Mrs. L. from Salford recalls the time when her elderly mother was a patient at the Salford Royal. "Mummy begged me to be at her side. A Holocaust survivor, she was frightened and disorientated by the staff and the setting. I found myself torn between meeting her needs and those of my large family at home. Ezra Umarpeh sent in a mature volunteer to relieve me. She was registered with the hospital and had obviously been trained, because her bedside manner was great. Mummy felt safe in her company and the intervention came just in time to prevent me from falling apart."

Ezra Umarpeh's Barnet branch will be launching its own local Sharing the Caring service for 2015. Our Barnet Volunteer Coordinator welcomes those who wish to take up this volunteering opportunity. "We receive many requests for volunteer carers, particularly from families using our respite room in Great Ormond Street. We enjoy excellent links with the chaplaincy and volunteering teams there and I think this new service will fill a gap and complement what we are already providing in London hospitals."

### Looking Toward the Future

Ezra Umarpeh continues to look toward improving their services and welcomes feedback from the thousands of users who benefit from their services each year. Recently, the charity refurbished its rooms at Great Ormond Street Hospital and the Homerton and opened new rooms in the Christies Hospital in Manchester and Guys and St. Thomas in London. A new scheme called TCES — whereby small medical-equipment items are available on prescription — is being rolled out across London and Ezra Umarpeh has become an accredited provider. Volunteer training and supervision is being improved. Medical equipment is being purchased and serviced.

Today, Ezra Umarpeh has become a household name synonymous with *chessed* and patient care. However, it cannot face tomorrow without the continued support of the communities it serves. Ezra Umarpeh receives no statutory funding and relies solely on the generosity of its friends and sponsors to help meet the growing demand for their services.

For more information, please call 0208 211 7999. To find out more about Ezra Umarpeh services, visit [www.ezra-umarpeh.com](http://www.ezra-umarpeh.com). ■