



The history of the Jewish hospital in Fürth until 1942

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The Jewish hospital in Fürth surely was one of the oldest Jewish hospitals in Germany. It existed since 1652. The original hospital near the Jewish cemetery was surrounded with a stone wall and mostly used by members of needy Jewish families, also by servants, old and invalid persons. The expenses were paid for partly by the Jewish community and partly by the heads of the households, when for example a sick servant had to be cared for. Besides the ward staff, a Jewish doctor, a Christian surgeon and a Jewish midwife were employed.

In the course of time it became evident that the hospital had not enough capacity for the increasing Jewish population. For this reason, the Jewish community acquired a tree nursery near Theaterstraße 36 from the master baker Kundinger for 1550 florins (the then Bavarian currency) to construct a new hospital. It took seven years to complete the building. The costs of 19,056 florins were raised by contributions from the local Jews, especially donations by the Königswarter family.

On November 1, 1846, a ceremonious inauguration took place in the presence of the lord mayor of Fürth, chief rabbi Dr. Löwy and members of the executive board of the Jewish community. On the same day, the manager of the hospital Jakob Reis was introduced to his office.

During 1864 the hospital building was raised by one floor. A modern operating room was installed in 1911. This was made possible by a large donation from Mr. J.W. Mack in New York who was the son of a former hospital doctor.

During the war years of 1866 and 1870/71 the facility was converted to a military hospital. During WW1 about 1,200 wounded were admitted to the hospital.

Until 1923 the care of the hospital patients was in the hands of a salaried manager. He received a daily rate schedule from the community administration. After April 1, 1923, the administration took over the complete care of the hospital patients on its own account.

Further acquisitions for the completion of the hospital equipment were carried out in 1927, which included a x-ray, a diathermy and a first class sterilization machine.

In 1929 the hospital underwent a thorough renovation, when walls, the kitchen and bathrooms were tiled. Central heating and an electric lift were installed and all rooms were fitted with warm and cold water piping.

In those years the hospital constantly depended on subsidies. The deficit was always covered by donations, contributions and, importantly, secured by a subsidy from the coffers of the Jewish community administration.

When the new municipal hospital in Fürth opened in July 1931, the local general health insurance office stopped referring its members to the Jewish hospital. Still in special cases referrals could be made to the Jewish hospital, but only if the same conditions such as the rates of the municipal hospital applied.

It was often necessary, especially during 1932 and 1933, to evaluate the operation of the hospital and adjust the services because the occupancy rate dropped considerably, but the deficit could always be covered.

After a ban of kosher slaughtering on May 31, 1933, the hospital which strongly followed religious rites stopped feeding Jewish patients meat. In order to supply gentile patients and all critically ill patients with meat, a second kitchen was installed on June 1, 1933.

According to a resolution of the general health insurance office in Fürth dated September 1933, no gentile members of the health insurance scheme were to be hospitalized in the Jewish hospital anymore. But as a result of a submission by the community to the head office of the health insurance, this resolution was moderated: Though the Jewish hospital was excluded from the local general health insurance scheme, gentile patients who demanded so would be admitted to it if a certificate of the attending doctor was produced, stating that further treatment there was necessary for the healing process. The admittance of Jewish members of the health insurance to the hospital was unhindered.

To adjust somewhat to the loss of occupancy and to improve the cost effectiveness of the establishment, the decision was made to admit more long term patients, so called *Pfründner* (old people receiving monetary subsidies from religious sources). This assured a minimum occupancy. In 1933 five *Pfründner* were living in the Jewish hospital. In the course of the following year also the palliative care ward was further enlarged. Dr. Frank was in charge of the palliative care patients until his emigration. By June 1942, 14 palliative care patients were in the hospital.

A higher occupancy rate was reached when in 1934 the medical clinics closed their doors for the Jewish doctors in Nuremberg. A previous request by the Jewish community in Fürth to the Jewish doctors there to bring their patients to the Jewish hospital had been refused. Now the

Nuremberg doctors had to do so. Thus, the cost effectiveness was raised and the worry about maintenance of the hospital was lifted for a while.

In 1935 an attempt was made by the Jewish doctors in Nuremberg to open a private clinic. This venture was supported by the local Jewish community. The National Association of Jews in Germany did not approve this plan and refused any financial aid. Because of this, the Jewish community Fürth requested an inspection of the Jewish hospital by Prof. Dr. Seligmann, who was the director of the health department of the community in Berlin. In March 1935 it was established that the hospital in Fürth sufficiently filled its role as a Jewish health institution. Consequently the petition by the medics in Nuremberg to grant a concession for a private clinic was refused by the authorities. The rate of occupancy of the hospital rose in the aftermath, because the demand by the Jewish doctors and their patients increased considerable.

At the suggestion of Prof. Dr. Seligmann the courtyard buildings were rebuilt in 1935: rooms and bathing facilities for the employees and a mechanical laundry found their new places there. The garden was remodeled by removing a separating wall which enhanced the recreation for convalescents and old age patients. This construction work resulted in an expenditure of 25,000 *Reichsmark*. The amount was raised by grants from the Jewish community, donations and a loan of 3,000 *Reichsmark* which was insured with a mortgage from the Central Welfare Office for German Jews in Berlin.

With the agreement of the representative of the *Reichsärztesführer* (National Head of Physicians), a medical director was officially appointed to the Jewish hospital on September 1, 1939. On the same day, a deputy director was employed by the Jewish community. On September 10, 1942, after the deportation of most of the Jews from Fürth, the contracts with both medical directors were terminated.

A circular letter edict of the regional state government in Upper and Central Franconia dated November 29, 1940, stated that the nursing school of the Jewish community in Fürth, which was integrated into the Jewish hospital, was recognized as a nursing school for six students of the Jewish nursing sisterhood. Because two students emigrated before, only four nursing students graduated from the course.

Almost all patients were included in the deportation transport from Nuremberg to Theresienstadt on September 10, 1942. Only eleven people who were physically unable to join the transport, including five Jews from Fürth, as well a some members of the hospital staff and the medical director were allowed to stay - to be deported later in the course of the Holocaust.

Literature and sources

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- Hugo Heinemann: Geschichte der Juden in Fürth. Undated print.
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