

Rachel Averbukh At Work



This is a photo of me in my public health job. I am talking to people - my potential clients. I am sitting in the center, under the white screen.

We had regular meetings with local people, it was a part of our job. Those who were interested in medical issues came and asked questions - as you see, they were basically elderly people.

When I returned to Leningrad from evacuation, I enrolled in the Medical Institute and graduated from it in 1948. That year there was an oversupply of medical graduates, and all of us were queuing in the city department of public health to get an assignment for a job.

I was temporarily employed for 2-3 months in Polyclinic 33 to substitute a surgeon on a leave. Later, there was a vacancy for the post of regional doctor in Polyclinic 32 in the Petrogradsky district. I worked there for 26 years, eventually becoming head of the department.

In 1953, when the infamous "Doctors' plot" broke, I had an incident at work. A woman from a Russian family from my area of service came to the chief doctor of our polyclinic, and started to tell him that I was trying to poison her family with medicines.

By chance, this conversation was overheard by an ordinary Russian man, who was also my patient. He was outraged, and shouted: "I'll tear your head off for Averbukh!".

In 1953 two Jewish doctors in my district were fired. One of them died from a heart attack soon thereafter, and the other soon died from a stroke. That's how upset they were.

Our polyclinic was not touched by anti-Semitism because of our chief doctor. He didn't dismissed any Jewish specialists. But I know that Jewish doctors were expelled from other polyclinics.

In my polyclinic I used to receive tickets to go to health resorts in the Pre-Baltic area, in Sochi. There I swam, lay in the sun, talked to people, went to the spa, made excursions.

While I had a rest, my husband stayed at home with the children. He was also given tickets to sanatoriums, where he underwent medical treatment for his injured legs.

In 1963, I, as a doctor, received a three-room apartment in Sailor Zheleznyak Street. We still live there. Then my husband, as an invalid of war, received an apartment in the Rustaveli Street, so we have no problems with accommodation.