

## Untimely death inspires medical-aid SOS [sajr.co.za](http://sajr.co.za)

July 8, 2021



The tragic and untimely passing of Kyle Onay, 37, from COVID-19 last week has devastated those who knew and loved him, but his death has inspired the community to create a fund in his name to help those without medical aid.

People were shocked last week when Onay, who appeared fit, strong, and healthy, landed up being taken to Edenvale Hospital, a government hospital, when his condition became critical.

Onay, who had diabetes, didn't have a medical aid. When his best friend, Yoni Margalit, heard that he was in a government hospital, he pulled out all the stops to have him transferred to Netcare Milpark Hospital.

It's impossible to speculate whether Onay would have survived COVID-19 if he had had medical aid, as his condition deteriorated fast. But the distressing passing of a young man in his prime has been the ultimate wake-up call to many about access to private medical care.

For the majority in the community, medical aid is a given, something taken for granted. However, Onay's passing has shone the spotlight on the rapidly growing need for assistance in this area. Although the public healthcare system offers excellent care at some institutions, it's most often overwhelmed, and resources are stretched.

Tributes flowed last week as news of Onay's passing spread. Onay, who used to run and go to gym, tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday, 22 June, and passed away just more than a week later. He was described as a *mensch*, someone who was kind, loved doing good deeds, and spreading joy.

"Kyle was my best friend. He always looked on the bright side and was loved by so many.

He was an amazing human being," said Margalit. "We did our undergraduate and honours degrees together. He was a pole holder at my wedding, and was at the birth of my children. He came with us on holiday, he was part of my family," he said.

When Margalit, a Community Security Organisation responder and businessman, heard that his friend was being taken to Edenvale Hospital, he sprang into action to have him admitted to a private facility. "I called Hatzolah, and we tried to see what could be done. I was told it would cost upwards of R60

000 a day, and I told Hatzolah I would make a plan,” he said. Onay was transferred to a private facility where a R200 000 deposit was required. It was mentioned that should Onay require long-term care, the costs would go up substantially. Margalit signed surety for it.

He contacted Onay’s former brother-in-law and boss at Auction Inc. (a real-estate auction house), Ari Ben Yitzchak, and together, they put the word out in the community to raise funds. “I didn’t realise how popular Kyle was until the money started to come in. Huge support was generated, soon covering all costs,” said Margalit. Sadly, Onay’s condition worsened, and he passed away in the early hours of Wednesday, 30 June.

His death led to an outpouring of love on social media and support from members of the community, and soon gave birth to the Akiva (Onay’s Hebrew name) Fund. The fund is being set up to assist those in need with medical and hospital plans, prioritising the elderly and those with comorbidities. It’s part of the SOSA Medical Project, which stands for Shiur-on-Sally’s Alley (registered as SOS for the Aged). The SOSA Medical Project was started last year by Rabbis Ari Hoppenstein, Shaun Wingrin, Lionel Horwitz, and Russell Davidoff.

It aims to provide funding for members of the community who can’t afford medical aid and private hospital care. It received the backing of the Beth Din and the Chief Rabbi earlier this year.

Said Margalit, “We have collaborated with the SOSA Medical Project, and while it’s still early days, we’re hopeful that donors will support this community initiative. “The aim is to ensure that every Jewish person who lacks funds – at least in Johannesburg – has access to some sort of medical cover when needed.” Said Ben Yitzchak, “Kyle had an impact on so many people’s lives around him. He brought out the good in people. Without knowing it, he influenced others to take on good deeds and be a better person. He was always smiling and positive. Lately, he had found his groove, and things were looking up. He became one of our top agents, and received a lot of admiration from his colleagues.

“When people started to hear of his situation, it was incredible how quickly the community rallied.”

SOSA, a non-profit organisation, was set up several years ago by Wingrin to offer spiritual support and services to those over 60 in Johannesburg. Interestingly, Onay’s father, Peter, is involved and often distributes care packs to people living in Berea. SOSA saw the dire need for medical assistance for members of the community reliant on public health, and Wingrin and Hoppenstein formed the SOSA Medical Project last year during the COVID-19 pandemic. They heard of Onay’s plight last week and made contact.

“We can see Hashem’s guiding hand throughout this journey. Our dream is that no Jew will be left without the option of an affordable hospital plan. The Akiva Fund is powering the SOSA Medical Project. It’s a special way to keep Kyle’s memory alive,” said Wingrin.

“It’s a scary situation for somebody who gets sick and doesn’t have a medical aid. We’re hoping this fund will alleviate this stress,” said Margalit.

To contribute, and for further information, contact [info@sosamedical.org](mailto:info@sosamedical.org) or call **011 882 8322** (Normal call or whatsapp).

By Nicola Miltz

# AKIVA FUND

powering **SOSA Medical Project**

לעילוי נשמת עקיבא בן פנחס חיים ע"ה

For the upliftment of the soul of Kyle Onay a"h

**Assisting our less fortunate with medical aid hospital plans**

currently prioritising our elderly and those with comorbidities

**With your help, we can ensure every member of our community has vital access to private hospital care.**

Your contribution will help provide immediate hospital cover to those in dire need. By pledging R1750 a month you can sponsor a community member's hospital plan. Once-off donations and other monthly pledges also welcome.

## Donations

SOSA - First National Bank  
Branch: Rosebank (250 655)  
Acc #: 62713804559  
(SWIFT code FIRZAJJ)  
Donate by Credit Card:  
[www.SOSAmical.org/Donate](http://www.SOSAmical.org/Donate)

*"This is a great mitzvah, because there are a growing number of people in the South African Jewish community who have no choice but to rely on state hospitals – where conditions make proper medical care enormously challenging."*

**Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein**



SOS for the Aged NPC (SOSA) · (2017/330505/08)

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☎ 011-882- 8322 WA 011-882-8322 E [info@SOSAmical.org](mailto:info@SOSAmical.org)

A 23 Bristol Road, Parkwood, Jhb W [www.SOSAmical.org](http://www.SOSAmical.org)

**Directors:** R' Shaun Wingrin, Dr. Colin Barlin, Sheldon Gordon

**Associates:** R' Ari Hoppenstein, Yoni Margalit, Gary Michelson