

# PATHWAYS

## A Study of Breast Cancer Survivorship

A NEWSLETTER FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

SPRING 2019

### PLACE MATTERS

*Building a research infrastructure for understanding the role of neighborhood on breast cancer survivorship*

*By Salma Shariff-Marco and Scarlett Lin Gomez*

Recent research shows that our zip code, that is, where we live, can be just as important as our genetic code, that is, biological and clinical factors, in shaping health. Where we live can affect our opportunities for engaging in physical activity, accessing healthy and affordable foods, promoting social engagement and social support, and exposure to stressful circumstances.

To carefully study how neighborhoods are contributing to survivorship among women diagnosed with breast cancer, the Pathways team has undertaken several efforts to build a research infrastructure that will address important gaps

in our current scientific understanding, so that ultimately, we can better understand how we can change neighborhoods or how people interact with their neighborhoods to provide optimal survivorship outcomes. Understanding the neighborhood features

that are influencing health behaviors, access, and outcomes are important in developing targeted interventions to improve health for all and reduce disparities. Examples include working with navigation programs to better evaluate and address neighborhood characteristics related to transportation, safety, and resources (food, support

*“Our zip code is more important than our genetic code in shaping health.”*



Scarlett Lin Gomez



Salma Shariff-Marco

groups) that can facilitate getting timely access to care and emotional/social support during treatment and transition to survivorship.

By using a process called geocoding (pinpointing an address on a map), we can pull in existing data to describe neighborhoods. These data describe various attributes of the neighborhood, including socioeconomic status (e.g., median income, employment, education, median home value), racial/ethnic composition, housing (crowding), commuting patterns (length of time, mode of transportation), street connectivity (a measure of walkability), traffic density, businesses/mixed land use, food environment, recreational facilities and parks.

We have linked these neighborhood measures to the addresses of Pathways participants like you when you entered the study. We then examined associations between these neighborhood factors and body mass index (BMI). We found that living in neighborhoods of lower socioeconomic status, higher numbers of minority residents, higher traffic density, higher commuting by car, and more fast food restaurants were associated with increased likelihood of being overweight or obese. These findings suggest that neighborhood characteristics might affect body size among breast cancer survivors

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and suggest an additional approach to help promote maintenance of a healthy body weight after diagnosis. To look at impact of neighborhood over time, we are also geocoding your addresses over the duration of the study. For example, we can examine whether moving to health-conscious neighborhoods improves outcomes like BMI.

We recognize that using existing neighborhood data does not tell us how residents may use or view their neighborhoods differently. Therefore, we are also asking Pathways participants in the 72-month follow-up survey about your neighborhoods—how you define them, what resources are available and if you use them, and other characteristics that can be supportive or harmful to health (e.g., interactions with neighbors,

litter, safety). Thanks to those who have already completed this survey!

Lastly, we are conducting neighborhood audits using Google StreetView images to provide data on the quality and conditions of neighborhoods that we cannot get from existing data sources. This includes conditions of sidewalks, pedestrian safety, aesthetics, as well as physical disorder and decay. With such a rich resource for characterizing neighborhoods, Pathways will be able to examine how neighborhoods impact health and contribute to meaningful interventions to address these barriers to health. Further, Pathways will be able to promote better outcomes among the growing population of cancer survivors. ❖

<sup>1</sup> Shariff-Marco S, Von Behren J, Reynolds P, Keegan THM, Hertz A, Kwan ML, Roh JM, Thomsen C, Kroenke CH, Ambrosone C, Kushi LH, Gomez SL. Impact of social and built environment factors on body size among breast cancer survivors: the Pathways Study. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers, & Prevention*. 2017 Apr;26(4):505-515. PMC5380478.

### PATHWAYS STAFF

#### VERONICA ZHOU

Veronica Zhou was part of the original team of in-person interviewers when the Pathways Study started in 2006. Since that time, Veronica has gotten married and is now the mother of three children, ages 7, 5, and 3! She also completed her nursing degree and has moved on to become a nursing case manager in Nephrology in San Francisco and trains patients on home dialysis therapy. She wishes everyone health and prosperity. ❖



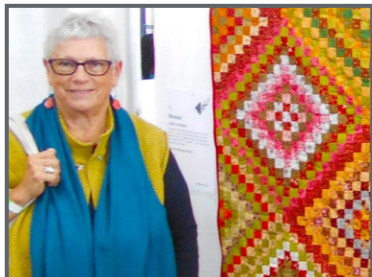
#### LILA LUK

Lila started with the Pathways Study in January 2019. Lila worked with the Division of Research for another study in 1995. In 1996 Lila obtained her teaching credential and became a teacher in a Chinese Immersion program in San Francisco. Shortly after, she started a family while continuing teaching until 2016. Lila is an avid baker and cook. We are delighted to have her join our team back in health research. Lila speaks Mandarin and Cantonese and will be assisting with follow-up surveys. ❖



#### JUDY JENSEN

Judy Jensen was also part of the original crew of in person interviewers when the Pathways Study began in 2006. Judy retired in early 2010 and six months later came back to work for us, for which we were truly grateful. Judy retired again last November. In this picture you can see how creatively Judy spends some of her time, in addition to traveling and enjoying her grandkids. ❖



## Update on Pathways Community Advisory Board (CAB)

We are excited to let all study participants know what the CAB has been doing for the past year and a half. Eight study members serve on the CAB, coming to quarterly meetings in Oakland from the Sacramento area, Pleasant Hill, San Francisco and Santa Clara; one person even comes from Pasadena! Other members include a former breast surgeon from KP, a therapist affiliated with the Women's Cancer Resource Center, and an advocate who represents the Bay Area Young Survivors. A team of Pathways Study staff and the facilitator from Zero Breast Cancer support the CAB activities.

Two current aims of the Pathways study call for the CAB to identify and prioritize ideas for future research and to provide input on proposed studies. In 2018, CAB members contributed ideas for questions to ask in coming Pathways questionnaires. At the November 2018 meeting of the Pathways Investigators, the scientists were very enthusiastic about getting ideas from the CAB about topics to investigate and their perspective on which are most informative.

The other goal for the CAB is to help create an education-focused publication or presentation for people finishing active breast cancer treatment and transitioning into what we call "survivorship". CAB members have heard from various researchers about Pathways Study findings so far. They responded to a survey about breast cancer survivor needs and we discussed which topics would be most useful, particularly for people with fewer resources.

**Now we need your help!** We will be turning Pathways and other evidence into materials to educate and empower people to improve their health and quality of life after breast cancer. **For this important work, please provide your input for future topics of interest on the attached postage paid postcard to this newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you!** ☒



For the most up to date information on the Pathways study, please visit our website:

<http://pathways.kaiser.org> ☒

### ***New Contact Information?***

In order to keep in touch with you we must have your latest contact information. Please let us know if your phone number or home address has changed. You are also welcome to call any time with questions about the study.

You can reach us by calling our toll-free number:

**1-866-206-2979** or email us:  
**DOR-pathways@kp.org** ☒

## Upcoming Telephone Health Survey

For those of you who have completed a 96- month follow-up survey, we will be calling you in the near future for another telephone survey for an update on your health. We continue to be grateful for your role in Pathways. Each of you add meaning and diversity to our team and contribute your unique perspectives to the information we are gathering. Thank you for participating! ☒



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