



PATHWAYS

A Study of Breast Cancer Survivorship

A NEWSLETTER FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Fall/Winter 2013

Fun and Friends Help Ease the Breast Cancer Journey

Lead Author, Candyce Kroenke, ScD, MPH

Breast cancer patients who say they have people with whom they have a good time, or have “positive social interactions”, are better able to deal with pain and other physical symptoms, according to a Kaiser Permanente study published in May in Breast Cancer Research and Treatment.



“This study provides research-based evidence that social support helps with physical symptoms,” said lead author Candyce H. Kroenke, ScD, MPH, staff scientist with the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research. “Social support matters for physical outcomes.”

“While many studies have found that social support influences emotional quality of life, this study is one of a small but growing number that focus on physical quality of life after a breast cancer diagnosis,” Kroenke said.

Part of the Pathways Study, this research included 3,139 female members of Kaiser Permanente Northern California who were newly diagnosed with breast cancer between 2006 and 2011. Information was gathered from participants’ baseline in-person

interviews (usually within about two months of their breast cancer diagnosis) which included questions about their social networks (including friends and relatives, spouse/intimate relationships, and religious, social and community ties); the kinds of support they received (tangible, emotional/informational, affection and positive social interaction); their emotional and physical quality of life, and physical symptoms from breast cancer.

Women with the highest levels of social integration and social support reported the best overall quality of life around the time of breast cancer treatment and better emotional quality of life. However, of the different types of social support, positive social interaction (defined as the availability of other persons to do fun things with) was the most important predictor of physical quality of life. Those who indicated having little or no positive interaction were three times more likely to report a low quality of life and greater physical symptoms.

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Fun and Friends Help Ease the Breast Cancer Journey

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Additionally, among late-stage patients, those with low levels of tangible support were almost three times more likely to report that their quality of life was lower than average.

“Positive social interaction was significantly related to every quality of life measure,” Kroenke and co-authors wrote. It predicted lower breast cancer symptoms, pain, nausea, and need for bed rest, and higher function. “Given that this dimension was determined by the availability of someone with whom to have fun, relax and get one’s mind off things, it is possible that positive social interaction may enable women to forget for a while the distress of being a cancer patient, and the physiologic effects last beyond the actual interaction.”



Findings from studies like this are providing information to help guide and support women following a breast cancer diagnosis.

This study has been published (Social Networks, Social Support Mechanisms, and Quality of Life after Breast Cancer Diagnosis, “*Breast Cancer Research and Treatment*”, 2013 May 9). We would be happy to send you a copy of the paper, just call our toll free number, **1-866-206-2979**, and leave your name and address along with your request for a paper. ☒

Collaborator's Corner

Lou Fehrenbacher, MD



I am a clinical staff hematologist/oncologist located at the KP Vallejo Medical Center. I have been practicing oncology since 1976 and served as the chief of oncology for 25 years. I currently spend time as the medical director

of the KP Oncology Clinical Trials program (KPOCT). Breast cancer is the leading focus of our clinical trials and more than 50% of KPOCT enrollments are to breast cancer trials. Our program has offered new treatments to breast cancer patients before FDA approval including trastuzumab (Herceptin), TDM1, and Pertuzumab. Our studies have included trials of prevention, survivorship, symptom care, hormonal treatment, immunologic therapy, radiation therapy and chemotherapy. The KPOCT program provides the breast cancer patients of KP unique opportunities to participate in cutting edge oncology care not found in most community settings.

Personally, I am involved in many National Cancer Institute Cooperative group committees and in internal KP oncology care delivery committees. My areas of clinical research in partnership with the KP Division of Research include clinical trial enrollment, cardiac side effects of Herceptin, the natural history of very small breast cancers, and the differences between the average community patient and clinical trial enrollees. I have been privileged to work with and learn research techniques from Larry Kushi of KPNC's Division of Research. I have enjoyed working with the Pathways team and look forward to seeing study results and applying new knowledge to the care of our breast cancer patients. ☒



PATHWAYS STAFF



Cecile Laurent

Cecile is one of the programmers on the Pathways team. She grew up in France where she studied Math and Computer Science. She discovered Epidemiology during her first internship and decided

to pursue her career in that field focusing on the programming part of it. She came to the U.S. 12 years ago and joined the team last year. Her job is to prepare analytic datasets for researchers and conduct analyses on the data collected during the participants' interviews. While not at work, she enjoys spending time with her kids and friends, knitting, sewing or being involved in some craft project. ☒

Jun Song



Jun started working on Pathways in November 2009. She considers Pathways a great research study with the best team she has worked with. Though Jun recently transferred to Kaiser Northwest (KPNW) region, she treasures her experience with Pathways greatly. Taking the experience she gained from working on Pathways, her current role at KPNW involves real time evaluation for high risk patient care management programs and analysis for strategic health care planning. ☒

Pathways Update: Who is Participating?

We ended enrollment into our study in May. We have 4,505 participants enrolled in our study and our current numbers for different follow-up intervals are as follows:

6 MONTH FOLLOW-UP
2,900 completed

12 MONTH FOLLOW-UP
3,760 completed

24 MONTH FOLLOW-UP
2,290 completed

48 MONTH FOLLOW-UP
2,216 completed

72 MONTH FOLLOW-UP
669 completed

We are grateful for your role in Pathways. Each of you adds meaning and diversity to our team, and contributes your unique perspective to the information we are gathering. Thank you for participating! ☒

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

1-866-206-2979. ☒



*Happy Holidays
from the
Pathways Study Staff!*





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