

Patricia Ganz, M.D.

Professor of Health Services, School of Public Health, UCLA; Professor of Medicine, David Geffen School of Medicine, UCLA; Director of the Division of Cancer Prevention and Control Research, Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center, UCLA

*"My research has always been focused on the impact of the disease and the treatment on the whole person and their family and that the disease does not occur in isolation."
-Dr. Ganz*

As a third year medical student in the early 1970s, Patricia Ganz, MD had her first exposure to both breast cancer and clinical trials when she met a patient who had agreed to participate in a breast cancer trial. The research study was comparing radical mastectomy (where the underlying chest muscle is removed in addition to the breast tissue and lymph nodes), total mastectomy (the chest muscle is not removed), and total mastectomy followed by radiation. Dr. Ganz recalls "it was mind boggling that women would go to sleep under anesthesia and...wake up and either have their breasts removed and all of their chest wall muscles removed or a modified mastectomy or would wake up and learn that they didn't have cancer."

Since that time, Dr. Ganz has championed research to understand the impact of cancer treatment on patients and their families. She led several large breast cancer trials incorporating quality of life measures and now holds a leadership role in one of the largest NCI-supported clinical trials groups, the the National Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project (NSABP). She explains, "We've surveyed literally thousands of women and heard from them about what their experiences were. We've tried to articulate that to the scientific community."

Much of Dr. Ganz's work is focused on the effects of breast cancer treatment on reproductive health, osteoporosis, cardiovascular risks, and cognitive function. Often called "chemo brain," cognitive dysfunction is a collection of mental symptoms thought to be a side effect of chemotherapy. Dr. Ganz's studies have shown that there is a biological basis for "chemo brain," which is "very validating to the community of women who have experienced these things and it also legitimizes the research and it makes people say that we've got to figure out what's going on."

Dr. Ganz's group also studies post-cancer treatment fatigue and has found that about 25% of women experience fatigue that prevents them from doing normal activities. Similar to her chemo brain studies, she found that "there are some genetic factors that put people at risk to develop this." Dr. Ganz reports that previously, patients were often ignored when they complained about chronic fatigue, but due to nearly a decade of studies, doctors and other scientists now acknowledge the problem.

Dr. Ganz describes the funding from two Susan G. Komen for the Cure awards in the late '90s as "really, really important because... all of the observations, all of the information that I learned at that time were kind of [the] backbone of what we're doing now." Dr. Ganz commends the organization, saying, "Without Komen funding, many important advances and standards of care that we take for granted today wouldn't have occurred."



Professional Accolades

1999 – American Cancer Society
Professor of Clinical Research
Award

1999 – Komen Professor of Survivorship Award

1998 – UCLA Medical Alumni
Association Professional
Achievement Award

1996 – Avon Breast Cancer
Leadership Prize

2007 – Elected to the Institute
of Medicine of the National
Academy of Sciences

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Komen Funded Research

1997 – \$201,326 – Quality of Life

1999 – \$25,920 – Reliability and
Validity of California Cancer
Registry Data for Breast
Cancer

2011 – \$500,000 – Stress
Reduction And Healthy Living
In Younger Breast Cancer
Survivors: Intervention
Development & Evaluation