

Prevention Means Hope

Brenda Cho was a working mother of a 2-year-old and 4-year-old when she received a diagnosis of stage 4 metastatic breast cancer in March 2015. It was her first diagnosis—she had never been diagnosed with early-stage cancer, and she had no family history of breast cancer. She had just turned 37 years old.

Cho met her oncologist, **John Fetting**, on the day of her diagnosis. “I still remember how he made the effort to call me that evening after speaking with some colleagues about the treatments we would pursue,” she recalls. “I thought that’s what all oncologists did, but he really went above and beyond on what was one of the most difficult days of my life.”

Cho is a strong supporter of the John Fetting Fund for Breast Cancer Prevention at Johns Hopkins. The fund supports breast cancer prevention research, from developing new ways to predict an individual’s risk for cancer from breast tissue analysis to testing novel drugs and natural compounds to prevent breast cancer.

As a metastatic cancer patient, Cho says, “It may not make a lot of sense to people that I am championing prevention. I’d love to find a cure, obviously, but I’m also focused on meaningful treatment to prevent people from getting a breast cancer diagnosis. This is very important to me as a mother and a sister.” Cho says she has three sisters who are all at increased risk of developing breast cancer.

“The Fetting Fund can help identify steps one can take so that future generations at increased risk for breast cancer never have to wonder every day, ‘When is it coming?’” Cho says.



She finds ongoing support with a monthly Johns Hopkins Breast Center group for young metastatic breast cancer patients, one of the few in the country for patients under age 45.

In June 2017, after two years of remaining stable, her breast cancer began to progress again. She is participating in a clinical trial of a promising new treatment. “I’m enthusiastic about medical research,” Cho says. “I think the word ‘trial’ can scare people because it sounds too risky or experimental,” she says. “To me, the underlying question about whether a new treatment is effective for metastatic breast cancer patients was appealing. We’re not going to find

out what works unless patients help doctors explore these new therapies. There’s really no new drug that gets approved without this kind of extensive testing. We need more research for better treatments, as well as ongoing research on prevention, to improve outcomes for patients and their families at risk.”

At a 2016 Fetting Fund event, Cho shared the details of her diagnosis and treatment with a public audience for the first time. “Everyone was listening to my story, and I was so touched because it can be a challenge to share a grim diagnosis openly. But what I want those who hear my story or others battling breast cancer to think is, ‘What can I do to get involved? How can I help to change the course of breast cancer?’” For Cho, the Fetting Fund provides that opportunity, so she spoke again to potential Fetting Fund supporters at a September 2017 event.

“I want to educate people, to break down the barriers and for people to gain a better understanding of what it means to live with metastatic disease.” ■

Survivor Soul Stroll

SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2017, marked the first annual Survivor Soul Stroll to raise money and awareness for breast cancer research. Radio One and its affiliate stations were lead sponsors of Soul Stroll, held at the Canton Waterfront Park, and the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center was a co-sponsor. Breast cancer prevention expert **Kala Visvanathan** and **Dina Lansey**, who heads Cancer Center efforts to increase minority participation in clinical trials, spoke about their work to a crowd of more than 500 people.

Geraldine Walton, a 72-year-old breast cancer survivor and Kimmel Cancer Center patient, was among the participants, walking 2.5 miles in memory of her sister, who died of breast cancer 10 years ago. Despite a hip replacement and knee problems, breast cancer surgery just 10 months before the event, and rainy weather, Walton donned pink and white bow earrings and a ring that she bought just for the day and joined the other walkers. “People were cheering me on,” says Walton. “It felt so good knowing we were raising money and awareness for breast cancer.”



From left, Kala Visvanathan, M.B.B.S. and Dina Lansey, M.S.