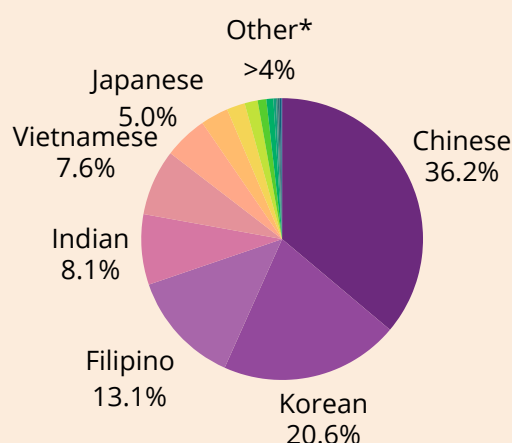


Study Updates

2463

ASPIRE participants
completed their first survey



ASPIRE Study Participants
(as of 9/25/2026)

1072

ASPIRE participants completed
their second survey

September in the community

This month, we're showcasing the Cedars-Sinai community outreach team members who work hard to connect with the large and diverse Asian American community in Los Angeles.

Zul Surani, the Associate Director of Community Outreach and Engagement at Cedars-Sinai Cancer, is an active member of the ASPIRE team. Zul was born in Kenya and is of Indian descent. In 2009, his mother had lymphoma and passed away six weeks after beginning treatment.

"The ASPIRE study feels deeply personal to me. It represents more than research. It represents visibility, inclusion, and the possibility that future patients from communities like mine (Asians) will be better understood and better served. Participating in or supporting ASPIRE feels like honoring my mother's memory by helping move medicine toward something more equitable and more precise."



*Other groups include Cambodian, Thai, Bangladeshi, Hmong, Burmese, Indonesian, Laotian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan.

Get to Know: Cedars-Sinai Community Outreach Team

By Elisa Añel
📍 Los Angeles, CA

In Los Angeles, the Cedars-Sinai team has the unique responsibility of outreach to the county with the largest number of Asian Americans in the US. Dong Hee Kim (Program manager), Noemi DeJesus (Clinical Research Coordinator), and Jessica Li (Clinical Research Coordinator) bring their own experiences, cultures, and connections to this work. They represent ASPIRE at community events in the Los Angeles area: cultural festivals, ethnic churches, and community events.

Los Angeles has a long Korean American history. Koreatown traces its roots to the early 1900s and grew rapidly with Korean immigration in the 1970s. Dong Hee grew up in Korea and moved to the US in her 20s. She was a journalist for 16 years prior to joining Cedars-Sinai. Her immigration journey shapes the way she views this work. “Participating in research is a way for us—Koreans and Asians—to make our presence felt in American society.”

Noemi’s motivation comes in part from growing up in the Filipino community. Filipino communities also have deep roots in Los Angeles: Little Manila became a center of Filipino culture and business in downtown Los Angeles in the 1920s until it was demolished to build Highway 101 in the 1950s. “I’ve always grown up in the Filipino community hearing ‘your aunt has cancer, your uncle has

cancer,’ and usually it would already be stage three or four,” she says. For Noemi, research offers an opportunity to give her family, friends, and community a voice in cancer research—and to have some fun along the way. “It’s always a family party. It really is. Being able to bridge those gaps between different groups of Asian Americans and encouraging everyone to use their voices has been so fun. And of course, there’s always food involved and laughs.”

Jessica was born in Hawaii and moved to Los Angeles for school. She is Chinese American and has conversational knowledge of Mandarin, Cantonese, and Korean. “I think that because of our diverse group, our outreach to the community is so much more impactful and meaningful.” That diversity is especially visible in the San Gabriel Valley where approximately one-third of L.A. County’s Asian population lives. The region is an important center of Chinese American life and has also become home to Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, and other Asian communities.



Noemi, Dong Hee, and Jessica at the Cedars-Sinai office in Los Angeles



Learn more about the
ASPIRE Cohort Study

🌐 <https://aspirecohort.ucsf.edu/>

Have any questions about the study?
Reach out!

✉ aspirecohort@ucsf.edu ☎ 833-501-0598

The Cedars-Sinai team is active in Asian American communities all over Southern California. So far in 2026, they have hosted over 35 events across Los Angeles County, including in the City of Los Angeles, Long Beach, San Fernando Valley, and more. Their local community partners and organizations have been essential in bringing these events to life, providing the support, collaboration, and networks that make connecting with Asian American community members possible.

Although Asian Americans are the fastest growing population in the USA, they are still underrepresented and aggregated in cancer research. Jessica shares, “That really masks the differences in all of our cultures, our languages, our lifestyle habits, and all of these things that can impact cancer causes and risk factors.”

However, the Cedars-Sinai Team emphasizes that there is something we can do to change this. They encourage community members to stay active in research, whether that be by reading it or participating in it. Noemi explains the importance of community engagement in research, “Everyone always wants to know what causes cancer and ‘what can I do to be healthier?’ and this is one way that we can contribute to that and find more answers, so we can one day be cancer-free.”



Map of Los Angeles County

For the Cedars-Sinai team, community outreach is about more than recruitment. It is about building relationships, listening to communities, and, as Dong Hee explains, ensuring Asian Americans are “a community that is visible through data.”

References

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Thank you to the Cedars-Sinai Community Outreach Team!

*Want to see more of the Cedars-Sinai team?
YouTube video @AsianCancerResearch coming soon!*



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