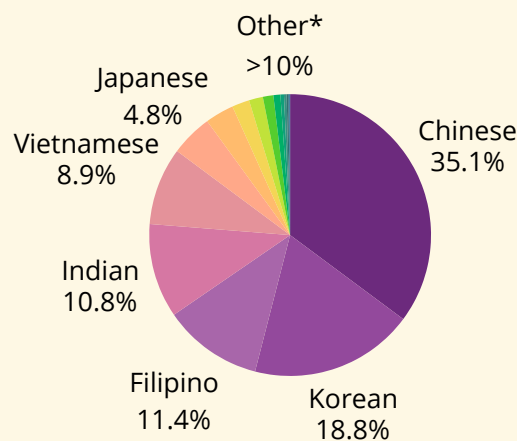


## Study Updates

1716

ASPIRE participants completed their first survey



429

ASPIRE participants completed their second survey

ASPIRE Study Participants (as of 6/18/2026)

## Slowing down for summer

June brings longer days, summer activities, and Father's Day. In this month's newsletter, we're honored to share one father's story and how a cancer diagnosis reshaped his perspective on health, family, and being present in everyday life.

We're also excited to share that Thai language options will be available in our platform at the end of this month (in addition to English, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese). Expanding language access is an important step toward ensuring more Asian American communities can participate in and benefit from research. We are working to add Hindi, Filipino, Khmer, and Hmong in the coming months.

As summer begins, we hope you'll find time to slow down, take care of yourself, and enjoy meaningful moments with the people you love most.

### NEWSFLASH

ASPIRE was featured by the **Los Angeles Times** this month in an article titled: *"One label, many risks: how grouping Asian Americans hides deadly cancer pattern"*

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

## Steve's Story: At a Different Pace

by Sarah Yee and Samantha Yee

In 2018, Steve Paik had a new house in Nashville, a newborn, and a new diagnosis. “My family and I were sort of living the dream, but it was also highly busy and stressful.”

A few months prior, Steve was struck by mysterious intermittent stomach pain. He spent that Thanksgiving on the floor with abdominal pain. Alarmed, Steve began to seek answers. Doctors initially thought Steve had an ulcer or another stomach issue. But when one doctor suggested taking a broader scan, they found a five-inch tumor next to Steve's small intestine, a gastrointestinal stromal tumor (GIST).

Steve was surprised because he had a healthy lifestyle—as an endurance athlete, six-hour bike rides and 20-mile runs were routine. Doctors told him it was a slow-growing cancer that hadn't spread yet. The survival rates were promising.



Steve after completing the Tokyo Marathon

“But still, it became this whole ‘life flashing before your eyes’ moment.” Steve said he immediately began preparing a trust for his family. The recurring question Steve had was: “Why me?”

He also described flashes of anger, frustration, and “there was also this feeling of grief. I wanted to see my kids grow up. I wanted to grow old with my wife. We had plans and dreams.”

He underwent surgery and began taking chemotherapy drugs, doing monthly blood work,

and taking supplements. Few knew what Steve was going through outside of his close circles. “I didn't feel comfortable telling coworkers because I worried I'd be treated differently professionally,” Steve said, “It felt lonely.” He didn't feel connected to the relatively small Asian community in Nashville or to many of the other patients he saw in waiting rooms, where he was often one of the youngest people there and one of the only people of color.

Three years into Steve's treatment, doctors detected regrowth of the tumor. Now living in Japan, he had to start treatment all over again. Through it all, he has kept running. “One thing I noticed before diagnosis was that I completely bombed a race I had signed up for.” Steve said it felt like he was constantly running at high elevation.

This physical slowing eventually became a broader shift in how Steve approached his life — one with side effects, but also one with more intentional choices about what he spends his time on. “I didn't want to take my kids to the park but be on my phone the whole time or have dinner with them but be thinking about deadlines at work while they tell me about their day.”

“Without cancer, I probably would have taken those critical developmental years for granted and not realized until my kids were much older, so as much as cancer sucks, it can also be a catalyst to bring out the best in a person.”



Steve and his family



Learn more about the  
ASPIRE Cohort Study

<https://aspirecohort.ucsf.edu/>

Have any questions about the study?  
Reach out!



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