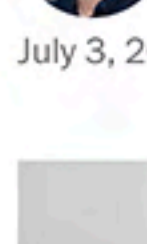


Susan Love, surgeon who crusaded against breast cancer, dies at 75

She co-founded the National Breast Cancer Coalition and helped draw increased attention to the disease, which remains the second deadliest cancer for women in the United States



By Harrison Smith

July 3, 2023 at 9:46 p.m. EDT



Breast surgeon Susan Love, a co-founder of the National Breast Cancer Coalition, helped galvanize a movement to treat and eradicate breast cancer. (Courtesy of Dr. Susan Love Foundation for Breast Cancer Research)

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Susan M. Love, an indefatigable surgeon, author and patient advocate who spent decades crusading against breast cancer, including as a co-founder of the National Breast Cancer Coalition, a grass-roots group that has aggressively lobbied to increase federal funding for research into the disease, died July 2 at her home in Los Angeles. She was 75.

Her death was announced by [her namesake organization](#), the Dr. Susan Love Foundation for Breast Cancer Research, which said she had recurrent leukemia. Dr. Love was diagnosed in 2012 with acute myelogenous leukemia, a blood and bone marrow cancer.

For years, Dr. Love said, interviewers came to her expecting to hear a tragic story about how she had been inspired to specialize in breast cancer, perhaps because she had been at the bedside of a beloved relative who died of the disease. Certainly not, she said: In fact, “it was pure sexism” that led her to focus on breast surgery in the 1980s, after she became one of only a few women to graduate from her medical school, and one of even fewer women to go into surgery.

“I was a chief resident in surgery at Harvard, and when I finished, nobody offered me a job,” she told a [UCLA interviewer in 2018](#). “And so I hung up a shingle, and the people that were referred to me were all women with breast problems. And I found that I could make a much bigger difference in that arena than I could fixing hernias and doing general surgery.

“There’s always something unique that, as a woman, you can bring to the table that actually makes it better,” she continued. “And the trick, I think, is not to just give in and put up with the [garbage], but to make your own path.”

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Harrison Smith is a reporter on The Washington Post’s obituaries desk. Since joining the obituaries section in 2015, he has profiled big-game hunters, fallen dictators and Olympic champions. He sometimes covers the living as well, and previously co-founded the South Side Weekly, a community newspaper in Chicago. [Twitter](#)

MOBE FROM THE POST. ... having a good time, that we should do what we want to do. I drink the expensive wine now.”

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