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Dr. Jinhee Kang (left) and Dr. Sunmin Lee (right) leading the program for Maryland participants.

Project to Help Korean Breast Cancer Survivors: Dr. Lee's Team from UMD Conducts the Program's First Cohort

"I thought I was the only one going through this kind of suffering, but I found out there were other Koreans who bear the same suffering as I do. We comforted each other and shared our breast cancer treatment experiences, which helped me a lot." Participants of the TOGETHER program consistently expressed similar feelings.

The TOGETHER program is conducted by Dr. Sunmin Lee's team at the University of Maryland School of Public Health. This program aims to improve the quality of life of Korean breast cancer survivors in the Washington D.C. area,

Nine Korean breast cancer survivors participated in the first Maryland cohort group which took place at St. John's Episcopal Church in Ellicott City, Maryland.

One of the participants Ms. Hong stated, "I was encouraged by the fact that I'm not the only one experiencing this pain."

Principal Investigator Dr. Lee said, "Breast cancer incidence is rapidly increasing in Korean women as compared to other Asian women."

Nevertheless, Dr. Lee pointed out that these women hardly get assistance with post-treatment care and have a hard time returning to a normal life due to cultural and language barriers.

"It is reassuring that there is a program for breast cancer survivors in the U.S. provided in Korean. Sometimes people look at me with sympathy due to my pain. However through this program, I learned how I can grow and better approach

others," said one of the participants Ms. Lim.

Dr. Jinhee Kang, a clinical psychologist who leads the program sessions said, "It is inspiring for me to see participants actively engaging and sharing their experiences."

The Maryland group participants said that they are seriously considering creating a support group for breast cancer survivors to share what they have learned during the 7-week program in the Korean community.

Following the completion of the 7-week first cohort, the second cohort will begin in early September. Dr. Lee asks that Korean women who are interested in the support program please consider participating.

Reporter: Tae Jun Heo
