

Julie Ray LBCA Grant Recipient SABCS 2025 Experience

In a word San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium (SABCS) 2025 gave me the gift of perspective. I could not be more grateful for the Lobular Breast Cancer Alliance (LBCA) grant to attend. I took it very seriously, using the preparation meetings, the SABCS app program schedule, information from the Alamo Breast Cancer Foundation (ABCF), and the experienced advice of former SABCS attendees. Time went into planning my path and options through SABCS and ABCF conference schedules as well as developing specific goals for my week in San Antonio. My aim was to 1) develop connections, 2) better understand pharma and biotech solutions for HR+ HER2- ILC stages I, II, and III with 1-3 nodes involved, and 3) procure information helpful to my Local Advocacy Team tactical action plans in the Carolinas approaching hospital systems, cancer care programs, and local table and speaking events.

My intent was to squeeze every last drop informationally and educationally from the SABCS and ABCF, but what I received was far richer than the data and perspectives presented. Yes, I learned surprising information about the use of chemotherapy in certain cases for invasive lobular carcinoma. Yes, I learned that there has begun far more breadth of research into liquid biopsy for ILC than I realized. Yes, I saw visual evidence of FDG PET versus FES PET scanning showing the unarguable advantage of FES PET in detecting ILC lesions and supported by NCCN standards which advise it when there is any concern about stage IV. Yes, I grew my medical vocabulary and started connecting more dots in the science of ILC than I previously understood. Yes, I learned that there is data indicating that underserved populations in the U.S. have lower overall survival rates due to access to care issues with cost, distance, family needs, updated technology access, and patient understanding of screening and treatment care options.

But I also witnessed and experienced the spirit and warrior's determination of advocates that transcend the weight and fear and exhaustion of breast cancer. Some did not have ILC breast cancer personally, but fight alongside the rest of us like LBCA Scientific Advisory Board members, or on behalf of someone they knew and loved like Dr. Doski or Daisong Liu or Emily Madaras or Natalie Kim. Some there had LCIS and were striving to get out in front of progression. Some had recent diagnoses, surgery, and had begun treatment of primary ILC. Some have contended with ILC alongside other types of breast cancer. Some were walking with canes. Some were wearing masks and had lost their hair. Some were metastatic ILC and have thrived for a decade or more. Moments of silence for significant contributors to patient advocacy who were lost in the last year struck me. Many of the patient advocates I spoke with were profoundly knowledgeable and invaluable to speak with during meals and time between sessions, like Valerie Frazer. But every last one that I met, heard, or learned about in sessions, in the exhibit hall, at events, and in the advocacy area was energized, diligent, hopeful, and determined. In short, this conference redefined my understanding of advocacy, the urgency and ingenuity of research, the thoughtful determination of clinicians, and the challenges and next steps for pharma and biotech.

All in all, this conference redefined for me the battle ahead. Time is precious, life is precious, and unity is precious. I made progress toward my goals and now see those goals

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and steps in the landscape of beating Invasive Lobular Carcinoma working in alignment with the miracle that is the human body.

Future prospective attendees should strongly consider personal study of medical terms and the related body systems in the weeks before attending SABCS. The SABCS 2025 app with posters and abstracts were invaluable to review ahead of time as well. Also, taking advantage of the opportunity to watch recordings of the sessions after the conference to hit the pause button, really read the presentation slides, take notes, and absorb key takeaways will offer even better understanding. This was a game-changing experience for me, and I strongly recommend SABCS to anyone considering it who have the time and wherewithal to prepare, attend, engage, digest, and apply it. The time is considerable and worth it.