

Susan Love, MD, Breast Cancer Surgeon and Advocate, Dies at 75

An influential author and out lesbian, Susan Love advanced innovative ideas on breast cancer as well as hormone replacement therapy.

July 12, 2023 By Laura Schmidt

Susan Love, MD, MBA, outspoken lesbian doctor and fierce [breast cancer](#) advocate, died at age 75 in her Los Angeles home after a recurrence of leukemia, [The New York Times reports](#).

“Founding Mother” and chief visionary officer of the Susan Love Foundation for Breast Cancer Research, Love was a breast surgeon well known for her criticism of the medical establishment’s treatment of women as well as being an early advocate of cancer surgery that conserves as much breast tissue as possible. Love was also among the first to speak openly about the risk of routine [hormone replacement therapy \(HRT\)](#) for menopausal women.

“Ubiquitous, energetic, forthright (some critics said brash) and at times controversial, Dr. Love, it was generally agreed, helped reshape both the doctor’s role and the patient’s with respect to the treatment of breast cancer, which kills more than 43,000 women in the United States annually,” the Times wrote.

Published in 1990, [Dr. Susan Love’s Breast Book](#) is widely considered the global “bible” for people with breast cancer, according to the Times. The book, written in a style for the lay person, will be released in its updated 7th edition this year and has been translated into German, Dutch, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and Hebrew.

Love was also instrumental in urging people to participate in breast cancer research, notably through an initiative titled Love Research Army.

In 1993, Love and her partner Helen Cooksey, MD, made history when they received approval for the first joint adoption by a gay couple from the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, which did not recognize same-sex marriage at the time, according to [DrSusanLoveResearch.org](#).

Love and Cooksey married in 2004 in San Francisco, when it was briefly allowed before a ballot measure made the unions illegal four years later.

Susan Love Foundation for Breast Cancer CEO Christopher Clinton Conway said that he, the foundation and millions of others around the world are “indebted to Dr. Love’s vision, dedication and commitment to ending breast cancer for all.”

“The light that Susan shared with the world has touched so many, and the world will mourn her loss,” he added. “As an advocate, a researcher, a doctor, a surgeon, a friend, an author and so much more, her legacy will live on forever in the love she showed the world.”

Love is survived by her wife and their daughter, Katie Patton-LoveCooksey.

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