



# TREE OF LIFE

HEALTH ADVOCATES

I'm pleased to share my passion for helping clients receive the best possible healthcare when they need it most. Here's the story of how I began my career as a health advocate, which led me to eventually establish Tree of Life Health Advocates.

## **My Early Career Highlights**

More than two decades ago, I began to work as an organizational and policy advocate and bedside advocate for family, friends, and others in my personal network. Tree of Life grows out of this experience, alongside my expertise on breast cancer, long-term care, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), clinical trials, and the end of life.

At Tree of Life, I work with adults of all ages who are facing medical challenges and need help understanding their treatment options, selecting the best providers in their community, and resolving frustrating insurance issues. If you should have a rare disease or advanced illness and wish to pursue experimental treatment, I can identify the most promising clinical trials. I also assist elders and their families to select and manage the care they need to attain an optimal quality of life. In addition, clients often ask me to work with them to ensure that their advance directives align with their treatment goals and values.

## **A Few of My Accomplishments**

Some of my achievements may have actually had an impact on your life. I am a prize-winning author and researcher. I've been a lifelong activist with a passion for healthcare justice. I served as bioethicist for the breast cancer activists who designed the first expanded-access arm of a cancer clinical trial. I've advised the FDA on developing policy to facilitate expanded access to experimental therapies. I also founded the Community Oversight Coalition, a watchdog group that ensured compliance with California's 1993 Breast Cancer Act.

## **My Background as a Scholar**

Earlier in my career as a professor, I taught medical students at the University of California, San Francisco and at Tufts University. I also taught courses at Stanford, Wesleyan, and Brandeis universities on birth and death; breast cancer; women, health, and technology; and HIV/AIDS.

I hold a Ph.D. in sociology from Brandeis University and a certificate in patient advocacy from UCLA. During my postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University, I conducted research on mammography. At the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine, I was a research fellow in bioethics. I've



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recently been invited to teach the next generation of health advocates in the Utica College graduate Health Care Advocacy and Navigation program.

## **How I Give Back to My Community and My Profession**

I've served on the national steering committee that is designing a credential for patient advocates and on the board of directors of the Center for Early Intervention on Deafness and the Northern California chapter of the American Medical Writers Association. An experienced nonprofit leader, I also coached the president of a national nonprofit serving individuals with mental health challenges and their families. In memory of the Jews who perished in the Holocaust and in homage to those who survived, I co-founded the Bay Area Holocaust Oral History Project, one of the oldest independent organizations of its kind in the country.