

Medical Financial Assistance makes “life-saving” gender-affirming care affordable for one Long Beach patient.

Seija “Jack” Rohkea was five months into treatment for gender dysphoria when they lost their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, Jack qualified for Kaiser Permanente’s Medical Financial Assistance program, which fully covered every aspect of their gender-affirming care, from prescription drugs to surgery.



Photo courtesy of Jack Rohkea

Jack began seeing Debbie Osaki, LCSW, gender mental health lead at Kaiser Permanente South Bay, for gender dysphoria in October 2019. “[Debbie] taught me about gender dysphoria and that it was a real, legitimate challenge that some people have with their gender identity,” shared Jack. “Although it was extremely difficult to process and to talk about, it has been extremely rewarding and freeing.”

Jack participated in individual, couple, and group therapy sessions. Debbie connected Jack with the “Transcendence” support group, where they met other patients going through the same experience. This community connected Jack with their Kaiser Permanente physician care team—[Dr. Sarah Fang](#), primary care physician, and [Dr. Robert Tuchler](#), plastic surgeon. “I would not have had the opportunity to receive this life-saving surgery had it not been for several factors,” remarked Jack. “Between Debbie and Dr. Fang, I was in the best hands possible to inform me every step of the way.”

“As a primary care provider, I regularly connect patients with the specialty care they need and we’re fortunate to have incredible physicians across every specialty at Kaiser Permanente, including gender-affirming surgical care,” said Dr. Sarah Fang, D.O., primary care provider and LGBTQ physician co-champion. “My goal is always to make sure that my patients feel safe and respected, no matter their gender identity or sexual orientation.”

In March 2020, Jack faced a new challenge: losing their job as a museum art exhibition coordinator and installer. Through Covered California, Jack was able to maintain Kaiser Permanente health coverage, but funds were tight. Debbie connected Jack with the [Medical Financial Assistance](#) program, which provides financial assistance for eligible patients. Now employed as an art history professor at a community college, Jack’s life is completely different today than it was just three years ago: “I’m able to conduct myself in public in a completely different way. I’m less angry. I’m not embarrassed... Now, there’s a lot of love.”

To learn more about Kaiser Permanente Southern California’s Gender Health Services and Transgender Care, visit <https://thrive.kaiserpermanente.org/care-near-you/southern-california/transgender/>.