When the Safety Net Fails: Economic Barriers to HIV Care Among Older Adults Experiencing Housing Instability

Yuka Imai

My research focuses on healthcare engagement among people living with HIV (PWH) who experience housing instability and cognitive impairment. As a nursing PhD student at the University of California, Los Angeles, my dissertation examines how cognitive impairment shapes healthcare engagement trajectories among PWH experiencing housing instability in Los Angeles. Through this work, I have become increasingly interested in how economic and policy-related factors further influence individuals' ability to remain engaged in care as they age with chronic illness.

Building on my dissertation research, I hope to examine how financial and housing insecurity, insurance instability, and policy changes affect the continuity of HIV care among older PWH experiencing housing instability. The proportion of older adults age 55 and older is increasing among both PWH and people experiencing housing instability (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2025; O'Connor et al., 2025). Many individuals in this population face overlapping vulnerabilities related to aging, poverty, stigma, substance use, mental health, and unstable access to essential services. For older PWH experiencing housing instability, daily survival often takes priority over healthcare engagement, making continuity of care especially difficult to maintain. In Los Angeles, where housing costs continue to rise and Medicaid policy changes create uncertainty about access to healthcare resources. Disruptions in insurance coverage or supportive programs substantially affect treatment adherence, healthcare utilization, and retention in care. I am particularly interested in learning how to rigorously study these relationships using health economics and policy evaluation approaches.

My motivation for current work is grounded in both clinical and community experience. As a nurse in Japan, I repeatedly witnessed how patients' financial circumstances and available social support influenced their access to care and quality of life, especially at the end-of-life. Moreover, while volunteering to provide healthcare resources, including advance directive information to people experiencing homelessness in Santa Monica, I have recognized how difficult it can be to navigate healthcare systems while simultaneously facing housing insecurity, cognitive challenges, and limited social support. These experiences made it impossible for me to ignore the reality that healthcare engagement is strongly influenced by structural and economic conditions rather than individual conditions alone.

The NBER mentoring program would provide training and mentorship that are not available in my current nursing training, particularly in health economics frameworks, policy evaluation methods, and the use of administrative and longitudinal datasets. I would especially value guidance on how to extend my dissertation work into research examining insurance transitions, economic instability, and healthcare accessibility among aging PWH experiencing housing instability. I believe this interdisciplinary training would meaningfully advance my long-term goal of conducting policy-relevant research to improve care for marginalized aging populations.

Curriculum Vitae
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Professional Summary

I am licensed as an RN and PHN, with experience at various settings in Tokyo and a remote island in Japan. I am currently enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of California, Los Angeles, Joe C. Wen School of Nursing. My doctoral dissertation examines the relationship between cognitive impairment and care engagement among people with HIV experiencing housing instability as a part of the parent study, Project CARE.

Education:

Philosophy of Doctorate in Nursing (2nd Year) — September 2024 - Present
University of California, Los Angeles
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Wei-Ti Chen

Masters of Science in Nursing — September 2024 - December 2025
University of California, Los Angeles

Bachelor of Science in Nursing — April 2010 - March 2013
Kitasato University

Bachelor of Science in Community Health — August 2005 - May 2008
University of Idaho

Course Work Completed in PhD Program:

Applied Statistics & Analytics for Health Science Research I, II, & III; Quantitative Research Designs of Clinical Phenomena; Measurement of Outcomes; Nursing Research Ethics; Philosophy of Nursing; Nursing Concept Development; Nursing Theory Development; Nursing Science I & II; Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Research; Grant Writing.

Licensure:

Registered Nurse Japan — March 2013 - Present

Clinical Experience:

Oki Dozen Hospital, Shimane, Japan — March 2022 - August 2024

Nursing roles ranged from emergency care to end-of-life support in both hospital and home care settings on Oki Island, a remote island setting.

The Japan Institute for Health Security, National Center for Global Health and Medicine, Tokyo, Japan

AIDS Clinical Center — April 2013 - August 2014

Care Coordinator — April 2018 - November 2019
Cardiovascular and Cardiology Department — October 2020 - January 2022

Honors:
Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, Gamma Tau at-Large Chapter — March 2026 - Present

Sasakawa Nursing Fellowship Program — March 2024 - Present

Publications and Media Contribution:
- Contributed to editing of the Japanese translation of *the State of the world's nursing 2025*, World Health Organization, 2026
- Authored articles on community health topics for *Bon Partage*, published by SHARE (Services for the Health in Asia & Africa Region), 2024

Research Experience:
Clinical Research Assistant — December 2014
Ishii, S, Miyamura, M, **Komiyama, Y**, Suzuki, S, Hattori, H, Ikeda, K, Teruya, M, Kikuchi, Y, Oka, S. A Medical Record Review of Hospitalization Patterns Among People Living with HIV at the National Center for Global Health and Medicine Hospital. AIDS Clinical Center at National Center for Global Health and Medicine, Tokyo.

Poster, Presentation:

1. **Imai, Y** & Chen, W. Cognitive Impairment Among People Living with HIV Experiencing Homelessness. 2026 Western Institute Nursing Conference. April, 2026. (Poster presentation)
2. **Imai, Y** & Salem E.B. An Integrative Literature Review: Palliative Care Among Older Adults Diagnosed with Heart Failure. 2026 Western Institute Nursing Conference. April, 2026. (Poster presentation)
3. **Imai, Y** & Salem E. B. An Integrative Review Protocol: Exploring Palliative and End-Of-Life Continuing Education Among Rural Healthcare Providers. The 2025 National Symposium for Academic Palliative Care and Research. June, 2025. (Poster presentation)
4. Bryant, C, **Imai, Y**, Hale, A; Kohout, E, Hodge, S. F, Samuel-Nakamura, C. Health Equity and Environmental Justice among Vulnerable Populations: Contaminated Communities in Urban Los Angeles and Rural Indigenous Reservations. The 2025 National Nursing Ethic Conference. March, 2025. (Poster and Break Session Presentation)
5. Tani, T, **Imai, Y**, K, Tokuwaka, S, Ienaka, F, Kurotani, K, Shiraishi, Y. Home-Based Care Challenges in Remote Island: Lessons from End-of-Life Support. The 74th Congress of Japan Hospital Association. July, 2024. (Oral presentation)
6. **Nagano, Y (Imai, Y)**, Koyama, M, Ishikawa, S, Ogane, M, Ikeda, K, Saijyo, A, Hattori, H. A Case of a Person Living with HIV Whose Relocation for Dialysis Initiation Enhanced Motivation Toward Independence and Treatment Adherence. The 70th Annual Meeting of Japanese Society of National Medical Services. November, 2016. (Poster presentation)
7. Ishii, S, Miyamura, M, **Komiyama, Y (Imai, Y)**, Suzuki, S, Hattori, H, Ikeda, K, Teruya,

M, Kikuchi, Y, Oka, S. Hospitalization Patterns Among Individuals with Sexually Acquired HIV at the National Center for Global Health and Medicine Hospital. The 29th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society for AIDS Research. November, 2015. (Poster presentation)

8. Ishii, S, Miyamura, M, Komiyama, Y (Imai, Y), Suzuki, S, Hattori, H, Ikeda, K, Teruya, M, Kikuchi, Y, Oka, S. Disclosure of HIV Status to Others at the Time of In-Hospital Death. The 29th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society for AIDS Research. November, 2015. (Poster presentation)
9. Ishii, S, Miyamura, M, **Komiyama, Y (Imai, Y)**, Suzuki, S, Hattori, H, Ikeda, K, Teruya, M, Kikuchi, Y, Oka, S. A Medical Record Review of Hospitalization Patterns Among People Living with HIV at the National Center for Global Health and Medicine Hospital. The 28th Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society for AIDS Research. December, 2014. (Poster presentation)

Teaching Assistant:
University of California, Los Angeles, Joe C. Wen School of Nursing
N13 Introduction to Human Anatomy Spring 2026

- Conducted weekly online laboratory overview and review sessions via Zoom for BSN students
- Created supplemental learning materials and assisted with quiz or lab exam preparation
- Responded to student questions

N250 Ethical Issues, Social Justice, and History of Nursing
N269 Quality Improvement and Population-Based Quality of Practice Fall 2025

- Assisted with course delivery, grading, and student support.
- Contributed to course content and co-facilitated a class session with faculty.

Guest Speaker:
UCLA - Sophia University
Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Program Fall 2022 & 2023
Nursing and Social Justice (N10), instructed by Dr. Benissa E. Salem.

- Presented the role of the health care system and the nurse's role on a remote island in Japan.