

## MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

25 January 2015

### **Ovarian cancer symptoms and prevention still misunderstood**

- **Over a quarter of Australians know someone who has been diagnosed with ovarian cancer**
- **Only half of Australians know that ovarian cancer exhibits symptoms**

Over a quarter of Australians know someone who has been diagnosed with ovarian cancer and yet half incorrectly believe that ovarian cancer has no symptoms or are unable to identify if the disease is symptomatic, according to a recent study.

Each year, 1400 Australian women are being diagnosed with ovarian cancer and over 1000 will die.

Ovarian cancer has the lowest survival rate of any women's cancer and only 43 per cent of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer will be alive five years after diagnosis in comparison to breast cancer's five year survival rate of 89 per cent.

The study, which was conducted by Wallis Market and Social Research involving a sample of 643 respondents, also found that just over half of Australians still wrongly believe that the Pap smear can be used to detect ovarian cancer and a third believe that most women diagnosed with ovarian cancer survive.

The study also found that while women aged over 50 – who are most commonly affected by ovarian cancer – are more likely than younger women to know someone diagnosed with the disease, they do not necessarily have a better understanding of the disease in comparison to their younger counterparts, prompting further concern about the continued misconception about this harrowing disease.

Around one-third of respondents incorrectly believed that the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine protects against ovarian cancer. Only one in 10 Australians knew that the oral contraceptive pill reduces the risk of ovarian cancer and this is the least well known amongst women aged over 50, with only five per cent of this age group responding correctly.

With no early detection test for ovarian cancer, knowing and recognising the signs and symptoms is the best way of detecting the disease.

“Although the study shows that more than a quarter of Australians know someone who has been diagnosed with ovarian cancer, it is alarming to see that it is still so misunderstood,” said Ovarian Cancer Australia Board Member Tracey Curro.

“February is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month and our key focus is to educate Australians on the symptoms of the disease to increase the chances of survival,” said Curro.

**The four key symptoms of ovarian cancer include:**

- **Abdominal or pelvic pain;**
- **Increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating;**
- **The need to urinate often or urgently; and**
- **Feeling full after eating a small amount.**

If these symptoms are new for women and they experience one or more of them persistently over a four-week period, they should consult their GP.

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month aims to raise awareness of ovarian cancer, the signs and symptoms for which are often very subtle, and the ways in which people can donate and pledge their support for women and their families living with the disease.

Treatment options for ovarian cancer have advanced little since the 1970s prompting an urgency for change. In response, Ovarian Cancer Australia launched a National Action Plan for Ovarian Cancer Research, an Australian-first agenda, setting out immediate priorities for research in order to make a significant change to the number of women dying from the disease each year.

“Recent research has discovered that ovarian cancer is a collection of diseases rather than just one, each with their own distinct characteristics and behaviours,” said Curro.

“This gives us a range of promising opportunities, such as better treatment solutions targeting the specific nature of a woman’s type of ovarian cancer, which can only be achieved through much-needed funding for further research.

“We hope that Australians come out in force this February to allow us to really make an impact on the prognosis of the disease, better treatment options, and greater support for women and their families,” she said

Australians can help by hosting their own Afternoon Teal® in February, teal being the international colour for ovarian cancer.

Australians can also show their support by purchasing a Teal Ribbon or Colour for a Cause teal nail polish pack from Chemmart® Pharmacies nationally. Ovarian Cancer Australia’s flagship day, Teal Ribbon Day, will be on Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> February.

**-ENDS-**

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**Notes:**

Teal Ribbons can be purchased for \$2 each from Chemmart® Pharmacy stores nationwide and from [www.ovariancancer.net.au](http://www.ovariancancer.net.au)

Colour for a Cause teal nail polish packs can be purchased from Chemmart® Pharmacy stores nationwide or online at [www.chemmart.com.au](http://www.chemmart.com.au)

For more information about ovarian cancer, Teal Ribbon Day or to find out how to host an Afternoon Teal® call 1300 660 334 or visit [www.ovariancancer.net.au](http://www.ovariancancer.net.au).

Twitter: [@ovariancancerOz](https://twitter.com/ovariancancerOz) #OCAwareness #Afternoonteal #TealRibbonDay #ColourforaCause

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/OvarianCancerAustralia>

**Spokespeople:**

- Women living with ovarian cancer or who have overcome the disease are also available for interview upon request.
- Australia's leading scientists and researchers leading the charge against ovarian cancer
- Ovarian Cancer Australia Spokesperson and Board Member, Tracey Curro

- High profile celebrities:

National:	Kerry Vincent, judge of The Great Australian Bake-Off, Queen of Cakes and with a family history of ovarian cancer
VIC:	Nicole Livingstone, Olympian and media personality, Patron of OCA and with a family history of ovarian cancer Gary Sweet, actor on House Husbands Karen Martini, celebrity chef and judge on MKR Dani Venn, MasterChef 2011 finalist, MasterChef 2012 All-star Cameron Smith, Rugby League Footballer
NSW:	Monique Wright, television presenter and with a family history of ovarian cancer Kate Ritchie, actor and radio presenter Adriano Zumbo, patissier and MasterChef regular
SA:	Tracy Collins, MasterChef 2014 contestant
WA:	Melissa Marsh, former Captain of the West Coast Waves basketball team, columnist
QLD:	Georgina Lewis, Queensland's Ten Eyewitness news presenter Maria Hopes, wife of Brisbane Heat Cricket Captain James Hopes and with a family history of ovarian cancer
TAS:	Jane Stephens, sister of Crown Princess Mary of Denmark Patricia Bailey, sister of Crown Princess Mary of Denmark
NT:	Alice Burton, TV and radio presenter

**About Ovarian Cancer Australia:**

Ovarian Cancer Australia is the peak national body for ovarian cancer and was founded in 2001 by a group of people who had been affected by ovarian cancer, either themselves or through someone they loved. Ovarian Cancer Australia provides support for women and their families, raises community awareness of ovarian cancer, advocates for improved services for women and funds and promotes and funds research. Ovarian Cancer Australia's vision is to save lives and ensure that no woman with ovarian cancer walks alone. Their work is guided by their core values of Optimism, Community and Accountability. Ovarian Cancer Australia has developed an ambitious strategic plan for 2013 to 2016 to develop and grow its support, awareness, advocacy and research programs. In order to achieve their ambitious plan, organisational growth and funding is critical.