

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE SILENT KILLER - OVARIAN CANCER

Strict embargo to Monday March 1, 2010

Today Ovacome launches a campaign that asks every woman in the UK to BEAT Ovarian Cancer by listening to her body and noting the alarm signals of the disease

For the first time, under the BEAT Ovarian Cancer campaign, launched today, charities across the English-speaking world are coming together to shout down the myth that this is a “silent killer”.

The partner charities involved in the BEAT International Coalition are: Ovarian Cancer Australia; Silver Ribbon Foundation, New Zealand; Ovarian Cancer Canada and Ovarian Cancer National Alliance (US).

We, and our partner charities internationally, think there is not enough being done to tell women about the early signs of the UK’s fifth most common female cancer – ovarian cancer.

Ovacome, and our coalition partners, will use the BEAT acronym to help spread the word about the main symptoms of ovarian cancer.

In survey results released today, (March 1, 2010) 87%* of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer didn’t know the symptoms of the disease and a third hadn’t even heard of it.

Launching the BEAT Ovarian Cancer campaign - that aims to make every woman in the UK aware of the symptoms - Ovacome Chief Executive, Louise Bayne, said: “In the last 20 years, there has been a transformation in the way ovarian cancer is treated - but public awareness of the symptoms has not kept up with this medical progress.

“Women are becoming more aware of other common female cancers and how to spot them – but ovarian cancer has been left behind.

“Following the UK’s first ever Consensus Meeting on Ovarian Cancer, we now have a shared understanding between charities and the medical profession as to what the signs of the disease are. We hope that by promoting these warning signs in a memorable and easy-to-understand way, women will be more easily able to discuss ovarian cancer with their doctors, and those with the disease can feel reassured that they were diagnosed as quickly as possible.”

In fact, the most important determinant of survival for ovarian cancer is the stage of disease at diagnosis. For women diagnosed with early stage disease the five-year survival rate is more

than 70%, but only a fifth of cases are diagnosed this early. For women diagnosed with cancer that has spread beyond the ovaries, the five-year survival rate is around 15%, and around a third of women are diagnosed with this stage of disease.

Louise Bayne added: “Our BEAT Ovarian Cancer campaign aims to tell every woman in the UK that this is not a silent killer, and they can BEAT Ovarian Cancer by listening to their bodies, spotting subtle but distinct changes and getting help at an early stage.

“In our view, the medical profession also has some work to do to raise awareness of the symptoms with their patients and to listen seriously to women who present with problems that could be linked to ovarian cancer.

“A typical GP will only see one case in every five years and most of these will be from women at the time of their menopause or later – it’s easy to understand why they want to dismiss other, less serious causes of symptoms such as IBS, bloating, weight gain before thinking the worst – particularly in a younger woman.

“However, this needs to change. Ovarian cancer needs to be investigated as an option early on. If it’s caught at the earliest stage, patients have a 90% survival rate beyond five years.”

- Survey conducted on 100 women with ovarian cancer by Ovacome.

Donate to BEAT at www.ovacome.org.uk/BEAT

Editor’s Notes

Ovacome, the ovarian cancer support and information network, which has over 5,500 members, is working to support both women and health professionals to improve the diagnosis of the disease. The charity is leading the way in building a greater understanding of the disease’s symptoms with the launch of its BEAT campaign in March 2010 to mark next year’s Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. As part of this GP involved initiative, Ovacome aims to introduce an innovative web based risk and symptoms toolkit for women who suspect that they may have the disease.

Ovacome, which has its own nurse-led support service, has an unrivalled understanding of ovarian cancer and the clinical trial process, with access to the UK’s top clinicians.

It prides itself on being the authority on the disease and the one stop shop for journalists wanting the latest information and statistics on ovarian cancer, as well media friendly case studies and photos.

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