

90% OF OVARIAN CANCER PATIENTS DID NOT KNOW SYMPTOMS OF THE DISEASE BEFORE DIAGNOSIS

Strict embargo to Monday March 1, 2010

Ovacome survey reveals urgent need for more symptoms awareness work for patients and GPs in the UK

In a new survey of 100 women diagnosed with ovarian cancer by Ovacome, (conducted in August 2009) a third hadn't even heard of ovarian cancer, 90% were unaware of its symptoms, while only 23% thought they might have cancer when their symptoms appeared.

Confusion over the cause of the "BEA" symptoms of BEAT – Bloating; Eating Less and Abdominal and/or pelvic pain could explain why half of those questioned had to wait longer than three months for a diagnosis after complaining of symptoms, and for 18% the delay was longer than a year.

The most effective ways to detect ovarian cancer are a CA125 blood test or scan. Although 40% of respondents received a CA125 or scan within one to three weeks of first visiting their GP, for 41% it took longer than three months, and 16% had to wait a year or longer. The survey also highlights the issue of communication about ovarian cancer symptoms with family doctors. Under half - 44% - believe their GP did everything he or she could have reasonably done in helping to diagnose ovarian cancer.

A small minority of GPs were very resistant to investigating ovarian cancer as a possible cause of symptoms.

One woman says her female GP seemed reluctant to take her symptoms seriously. "I went to her constantly with pain and bloated, swollen stomach and breathlessness," she says. "She said I had irritable bowel syndrome and diverticulitis and I felt she regarded me as a nuisance." Two days after her last GP visit, she turned up at the accident and emergency department of her local hospital because she had "swelled up like an eight-month pregnant woman" and, shortly afterwards, was given a year to live after being diagnosed with stage IV ovarian cancer that had spread to her lungs.

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. Ovacome aims to introduce an innovative web based risk and symptoms toolkit project 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.

For more information, please contact Ovacome PR Amanda Hayhurst or Holly Brace on 020-8 973 2630, ahayhurst@schwartz-pr.co.uk hbrace@schwartz-pr.co.uk or Juliet Morrison on 01273 206912 or 0778 4652520; julietmorrison@btconnect.com or Louise Bayne, Chief Executive, on l.bayne@ovacome.org.uk

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