

Ovarian Cancer and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities:

A quick guide for healthcare
professionals





Over 7,500 people are diagnosed with ovarian cancer each year.

There is **no screening programme for ovarian cancer** and signs and symptoms can be vague. It is important for people to recognise the **signs and symptoms** and **seek advice from a doctor** as soon as possible.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities experience significant health inequalities. This guide was made to highlight some of the specific barriers which exist for those who may present with signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer and how to improve best practice.



Barriers to healthcare access

Accessing health information, including finding information on primary care, may be difficult due to low levels of literacy or digital access. [1]

The experience of discrimination means that many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people may be reluctant to engage with health and care services. [2]

Travelling communities may miss appointments due to their transient lifestyle, and they may be away at the time of the appointment.

Gypsy and Traveller communities have reported being refused registration at a doctor's surgery because they have no proof of identification or because they have no address, despite there being no NHS regulatory requirement to provide this. [2]

Barriers to discussing ovarian cancer

Cancer is often stigmatised within Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities with feelings of fear and shame preventing access to primary care. Cancer can be referred to as the “Kuva” or “Tavu” and is difficult to talk about.

Privacy around illness may prevent discussions with family and friends about health concerns. There may also be a reluctance to discuss sex-specific conditions like gynaecological health, with the opposite sex [3]

Language is one of the main barriers for the Roma community in the UK in accessing medical support or advice.

Ovacome can offer interpretation and translation services for anyone affected by ovarian cancer.

Citations:

[1] Scadding, S and Sweeney, S. Digital Exclusion in Gypsy and Traveller communities in the United Kingdom. Friends Families and Travellers | September 2018

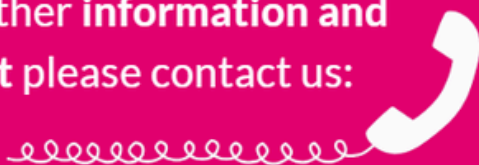
[2] Sweeney, S and Worrall, S. No room at the inn: How easy is it for nomadic Gypsies and Travellers to access primary care? Friends Families and Travellers 20.03.19

[3] Condon L, Curejova J, LEEANNE Morgan D, Fenlon D. Cancer diagnosis, treatment and care: A qualitative study of the experiences and health service use of Roma, Gypsies and Travellers. Eur J Cancer Care. 2021;30:e13439

Best practice

- Remember the B.E.A.T symptoms for ovarian cancer. **B**loating, **E**ating difficulty, **A**bdominal pain and **T**oilet changes.
- Be aware of specific vulnerabilities for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities when registering with primary care.
- If an appointment is missed, consider how to follow up; a letter may not be effective.
- Ask the patient if they have a gender preference for their GP appointment.
- Offer an interpreter.
- Remember that a patient may not want to talk if family members are present.
- Always offer a chaperone for any examinations.
- Consider outreach. A pre-arranged visit to traveller sites can forge good relationships between healthcare professionals and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

For further information and support please contact us:



- ▶ **Call:** 0800 008 7054
- ▶ **Email:** support@ovacome.org.uk
- ▶ **Text or Whatsapp:** 07503 682 311
- ▶ **Go online** at ovacome.org.uk

**Call, email or text our support line, open
Monday-Friday 10am-5pm**

**With thanks to the following
organisations who contributed to
this leaflet:**

Friends, Family, Travellers

Margaret Clitherow Trust

Roma Voice Centre

