

## Ovarian Cancer

### Introduction

My topic for this fact sheet is ovarian cancer. I decided to do this topic because I was talking with my physician and she informed me that ovarian cancer is a growing problem in the United States. Since there are few or no symptoms it is hard to catch ovarian cancer in its early stages when it is most easily cured. I thought it was important to educate myself and others about ovarian cancer.

### Section 1: Background and Problem Statement

#### Web site #1 Name: Healthy People 2010

- **Web address:**  
[http://www.westchestergov.com/health/LGBT\\_CompanionDocument/Cancer\\_2010LGBT.pdf](http://www.westchestergov.com/health/LGBT_CompanionDocument/Cancer_2010LGBT.pdf)
- **Background Information:**

Every year 23,000 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and only 9,000 survive. Ovarian cancer is the deadliest gynecologic cancer and the fifth deadliest kind of cancer. There are common risk factors among all women but it is particularly apparent in lesbian women because they are less likely to have children, not using oral contraceptives and barriers to health care (Disparities paragraph 5).

#### Web site #2 Name: Ovarian Cancer

- **Web address:** [http://www.fhcrc.org/research/diseases/ovarian\\_cancer/](http://www.fhcrc.org/research/diseases/ovarian_cancer/)
- **Background Information:**

Ovarian Cancer, once called the “silent killer”, begins in the ovaries. The most common kind of tumor grows in the cells of the surface of the ovaries, and it is known as epithelial carcinoma. Ovarian cancer can also begin in the egg-forming cells or in the ovaries’ connective tissue. These last two are referred to as germ-cell tumors and stromal tumors and are much rarer. There are some symptoms that women with ovarian cancer are likely to develop, such as abdominal pain, urinary urgency, having a hard time eating and feeling full quickly (Paragraph 1).

### **Web site #3 Name: Ovarian Cancer**

- **Web address:**  
[http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/cancer/type\\_ovarian\\_info.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/cancer/type_ovarian_info.pdf)
- **Background Information:**

Ovarian cancer is the abnormal growth of ovarian cells forming a mass or tumor; it is most common in women over the age of 40. It is the seventh most common cancer among women in the United States and often does not show general symptoms until it is at an advanced stage. The exact causes are unknown and like most diseases the sooner ovarian cancer is found the better the chances are for recovery. About 90% of ovarian cancers are epithelial cell cancers, which develop in the cells that cover the ovarian surface (Paragraph 1-2). There are no symptoms of ovarian cancer but there are some signs such as gas, constipation, diarrhea, tiredness, back or leg pain, and long term stomach pain. Risk factors of ovarian cancer include but are not limited to age, infertility, family history and ethnicity (Paragraph 3-4).

## **Section 2: Research**

### **Web site #1 Name: Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station**

- **Web address:** <http://www.ag.auburn.edu/aaes/webpress/2005/cancer.htm>:
- **Summary of the research**

Scientists are using egg-laying hens to find ways to detect ovarian cancer early and maybe eventually prevent it. Hens have a hormonal cycle and ovarian cells that are similar to humans. He has observed that the fewer pregnancies and other disruptions in a woman's hormonal cycle, the higher her chance of getting ovarian cancer. He also has found that giving the hens progesterone, the female hormone used in birth control pills, for a year, interrupting the reproductive cycle, lowers the rate of ovarian cancer in the hens from 40 percent to 25 percent.

### **Web site #2 Name: The Ovarian Cancer Research Project at Dartmouth**

- **Web address:** <http://www.cancer.dartmouth.edu/gyn/ovarianresearch.shtml>
- **Summary of the research:**

Dr. Hillary White has been studying ovarian cancer cells and how they behave, where they grow, why we are not immune. She showed that hormones can control these cells so a fetus is not attacked by the mother's immune system. Dr. White has discovered that tumor-induced hormone interferes with the normal immune response allowing the cancer cells to survive; she has also shown that this can be prevented by allowing the body's immune system to attack the cells.

### **Web site #3 Name: What's New in Ovarian Cancer**

- **Web address:**  
<http://www.cancerhelp.org.uk/trials/understanding/default.asp?page=5450#why>
- **Summary of the research:**

Currently, there is no accurate way to screen for ovarian cancer. Clinical trials are in progress. Two main tests for screening trials are being used; a blood test for CA125 and a transvaginal ultrasound scan (Screening for Ovarian Cancer). We can test for two gene faults involved in ovarian cancer; these two genes are BRCA 1 and BRCA 2. Having breast cancer or ovarian cancer in your family may be due to people in your family carrying a fault. Having one of these faults increases your risk for developing breast or ovarian cancer. Researchers are looking into the relationship between these two faults and ovarian cancer by studying families that have at least two relatives who have had or have ovarian cancer. This is helping women make decisions about preventing ovarian cancer. Scientists are able to estimate how much longer a woman with a mutation will live if she has both her ovaries removed (BRCA 1 and 2 Genes).

### **Section 3: Statistics**

#### **Web site #1 Name: National Cancer Institute Ovarian Cancer**

- **Web address:** <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/ovarian>
- **Summary of the statistics:**

According to the National Cancer Institute, Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results, from 2002-2006 about 1.3 percent of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer were under the age of 20. 3.5 percent were between 20 and 34, 7.4 percent were between 35 and 44 and 18.9 percent were between 45 and 54. About 22.3

percent of ovarian cancer patients were between 55 years old and 64, 19.9 percent were between 65 and 74, 19 percent were between 75 and 84 and 7.6 percent were 85 years old or older (SEER Incidence). Ethnicity statistics state that 13.8 per 100,000 white women were affected, 10.1 per 100,000 black women and 11.3 per 100,000 Hispanic women. In Asian/Pacific Islander women, 9.9 out of 100,000 were affected and in American Indian/Alaskan Native women, 10.8 per 100,000 women were affected (SEER Incidence). The survival rate for white women is 45.8 percent and for black women it is 37.4 percent.

**Web site #2 Name: <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/ovarian/statistics/>**

- **Web address: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Ovarian Cancer**
- **Summary of the statistics:**

Ovarian cancer causes more deaths than any other female reproductive cancer; it is the fifth leading cause of cancer death. Ovarian cancer deaths are less common than lung cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer and pancreatic cancer. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2005 19,842 women in the United States were diagnosed with ovarian cancer and 14,787 women died from this.

**Web site #3: Name: Ovarian Cancer Statistics**

- **Web address: <http://medicineworld.org/cancer/ovariancancer/ovarian-cancer-statistics.html>**
- **Summary of the statistics:**

Ovarian cancer is a growing problem. It is responsible for about 4 percent of all cancers in women. Every woman has about a 1.7 percent chance of developing ovarian cancer and about one percent chance of dying from it. There is a higher risk for Caucasian women to develop and die from this cancer than there is for African American women. About 78 percent of people with ovarian cancer will survive after one year of the diagnosis; it is a fairly less aggressive form of cancer. If ovarian cancer is detected quick enough and it has not spread outside of the ovary, it is very likely to be curable. Only 29 percent of all ovarian cancers are found at an early stage because of the lack of symptoms. The number of ovarian cancer related deaths is rising but because of major medical progress the

survival rate is increasing from 36 percent in 1970 to 50 percent in the 1990s (Paragraph 1-2).

## Section 4: Consumer Information

### Web site #1 Name: Ovarian Cancer

- Web address: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/ovarian-cancer/DS00293>
- Summary of the information:

Medical advances have made treatments for ovarian cancer much more efficient. According to the American Cancer Society, if diagnosed in the earliest stages, the survival rate is almost 93 percent. Formerly, this cancer was known as the “silent killer” because typically it was not discovered until it had spread to other organs. New medical research has shown that most women will have a few symptoms which can potentially lead to earlier discovery. The chance of surviving ovarian cancer increases if it is discovered early. Only about 20 percent of patients discover they have ovarian cancer before the disease has spread (Paragraph 1-3).

### Web site #2 Name: Medline Plus Ovarian Cancer

- Web address: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ovariancancer.html>
- Summary of the information:

Ovarian cancer usually affects women over the age of 50. The sooner it is found and treated, the higher the survival rate. However, ovarian cancer is very hard to detect early because there are no severe symptoms.

### Web site #3 Name: Ovarian Cancer National Alliance

- Web address: <http://www.ovariancancer.org/about-ovarian-cancer/>
- Summary of the information:

Ovarian cancer is the growth of cells beginning in the ovary. These tumors can be benign, noncancerous, or malignant, cancerous. Malignant cells in the ovaries can spread to other parts of the body, directly to other organs, which is most common, or through the bloodstream or lymph nodes. Causes of ovarian cancer are still unknown; however, genetic errors caused by the monthly release

of an egg and increased hormone levels before and during ovulation may play a part in abnormal cell growth.

## **Section 5: Solutions to the Problem (or Issue)**

### **Web site #1 Name: Ovarian Cancer National Alliance**

- **Web address:** <http://www.inspire.com/groups/ovarian-cancer-national-alliance/>
- **Summary of the information:**

The Ovarian Cancer National Alliance is a support community that connects patients, families, friends and caregivers. There are places to write in journals and have discussions for people that are in some way being affected by ovarian cancer.

### **Web site #2 Name: National Cancer Institute**

- **Web address:** <http://ovariancancer.gog199.cancer.gov/ocp.html>
- **Summary of the information:**

This is a government site that educates on possible ways to prevent ovarian cancer. To help and to prevent ovarian cancer risk-reducing surgeries are being performed. Salpingo-oophorectomy is the removal of the ovaries and fallopian tubes. This may result in an 85 to 95 percent reduction in the risk for ovarian cancer. Also, using oral contraceptives can reduce the risk of developing ovarian cancer. There are studies being done to support this but scientists are still unsure about whether or not oral contraceptives are definitely a factor in preventing ovarian cancer.

### **Web site #3 Name: Ovarian Cancer Research Fund**

- **Web address:** <http://www.ocrf.org/>
- **Summary of the information:**

The OCRF works “to fund research to find a method of early detection and ultimately a cure for ovarian cancer.” Every year the program funds research through different grants programs. They also educate women about ovarian cancer to make a difference to those who may be at risk.

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