

# OVARIAN CANCER FACT SHEET



Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation Inc.  
Level 1, 459 Toorak Road, Toorak VIC 3142

## AUSTRALIAN OVARIAN CANCER STATISTICS

- It is estimated more than 1,600 new cases of ovarian cancer will be diagnosed in 2018
- The five-year survival rate for **all** women diagnosed with ovarian cancer is **45 per cent**
- Women who are diagnosed in the advanced stages of the disease – the majority of cases – only have a **20%-25% five-year survival rate.**
- **70% of women** diagnosed with advanced stage ovarian cancer will experience a recurrence within 12-24 months of completing their initial treatment

### The overall picture

- Ovarian cancer is the leading cause of death of all gynaecological cancers
- Ovarian cancer ranks as the 4th or 5th most common cause of all cancer deaths in females
- Ovarian cancer has a lower survival rate than both breast and cervical cancer
- This disease affects women of all ages: it could be your mother, wife, sister, or even your daughter
- One woman dies every 8 hours from ovarian cancer
- Unlike other cancers, there is NO early detection test

### The misconceptions

- Over 50% of the community incorrectly believe a pap smear diagnoses ovarian cancer
- Symptoms are vague and usually present only at an advanced stage. So raising awareness around symptoms won't save lives. Only early detection will make a significant impact.

### Diagnosis

- We need a method to accurately detect ovarian cancer in its earliest stages, before it has spread to other parts of the body
- About 70% of diagnoses are when the cancer is in the advanced stage, once the disease has already spread to other parts of the body

### Early detection prognosis

- Survival rates improve dramatically when cancer is detected and treated early – as evidenced by the introduction of early detection programs for cervical cancer and breast cancer via the Pap Smear and the Mammogram
- When detected and treated early, more than 90% of women will survive beyond five years compared with only 20-25% when diagnosed at a late stage
- Approximately 75% of women diagnosed with advanced stage ovarian cancer have a recurrence within 12-24 months of completing their initial treatment

### Changing the outcome for women

- An important ultimate aim of the OCRF is to develop a test that is accurate, non-invasive and cost effective, so it becomes a habitual part of every women's regular health check-up routine, along with mammograms and pap smears

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## What is Ovarian Cancer?

Ovarian cancer is a malignant tumour in one or both ovaries. Recent research suggests that many ovarian cancers start in the fallopian tubes. This is different to fallopian tube cancer which is rare.

Ovarian Cancer is the most lethal of all gynaecological cancers with 125,000 women diagnosed around the world each year. Unlike other cancers, there is NO early detection test. The only way to definitively diagnose ovarian cancer is by taking a tissue sample during surgery.

## How common is it in Australia?

Each year, about 1600 Australian women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer. The average age is 64. Ovarian cancer is usually diagnosed in women over 50 and the lifetime risk of developing ovarian cancer is around 1 in 80 women.

Although it is less common than breast cancer (which affects one in 11 women), **proportionally more women die from ovarian cancer because it is usually diagnosed in its advanced stages when it is very difficult to treat and almost impossible to cure.**

One woman dies from Ovarian Cancer in Australia every 8 hours.

While advances have been made in survival rates for breast cancer, there have been no recent breakthroughs in ovarian cancer, and survival remains poor.

## What is the survival rate for ovarian cancer?

If the cancer is diagnosed and treated early, between 90-100% of patients will survive for more than five years. In contrast, **only 20%-25% of women diagnosed at late stage will survive for more than five years.**

## Why it is so lethal

Ovarian cancer is known as the silent killer or *the disease that whispers*. The symptoms associated with the disease are vague and easily mistaken for common women's health issues so they rarely set off alarm bells. As a result, the early signs of ovarian cancer are mistakenly attributed to the symptoms of gastrointestinal problems or common female complaints. **The delay in addressing complaints** ultimately results in women being diagnosed in the advanced stages of the disease, which **significantly reduces survival rates.**

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## [The Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation \(OCRF\)](#)

### History

The OCRF was established in early 2000 and is Australia's leading independent body dedicated to national ovarian cancer research. One of our goals is to raise awareness and vital research funds for the development of an early detection test to save women's lives.

### Our mission

From our establishment, we have been clear about our mission:

***Funding innovative ovarian cancer research to save women's lives through early detection and personalised treatment***

Our funding is directed to research studies that are focussed on finding an early detection test, as well as research that explores therapies that will extend women's lives.

The OCRF has three main objectives:

1. *To develop and implement an early detection program for ovarian cancer that is non-invasive, highly accurate and widely available.*
2. *To decrease the mortality rate, management and long-term survival of women with ovarian cancer.*
3. *To attract and fund the most innovative and skilled researchers.*

We rely solely on the financial support of corporate Australia and community groups. The majority of funds are distributed as scientific grants to dedicated ovarian cancer researchers in Australia and New Zealand hospitals, universities and research institutes.

### Contact us

#### Interviews

For interviews with any OCRF-funded researchers or Lucinda Nolan, CEO, please contact Arbel Givargis, Marketing Director – [Arbel.Givargis@ocrf.com.au](mailto:Arbel.Givargis@ocrf.com.au) / 0425 375 157

Visit [www.ocrf.com.au](http://www.ocrf.com.au) to find out more.