**Ovarian Cancer Awareness: OCAM**

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**EMBARGO: 1 March 2018**

**OVARIAN CANCER STEALS 90,533 YEARS FROM WOMEN EACH YEAR**

**Research charity launches campaign to develop vital screening tool**

* On average, ovarian cancer steals 90,533 years of life from UK women each year
* One woman dies of ovarian cancer every two hours in the UK
* Symptom awareness is vital but not the only solution – we need earlier detection
* Ovarian Cancer Action wants to develop a screening tool and replicate the success of cervical screening
* A significant proportion of ovarian cancers arise from the fallopian tubes, not from the ovaries

Figures released today [1 March 2018], to mark the start of Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, show on average each year ovarian cancer steals 90,533 years from UK women who die before their time. In 2016 alone the disease robbed women in the UK of 91,658 years.

Research charity Ovarian Cancer Action analysed data from the Global Health Data Exchange[[1]](#footnote-1) and found on average, ovarian cancer shortened a woman’s life by nearly two decades (19 years). That’s not just a number, that’s missed anniversaries, birthdays, weddings and first days of school; countless hugs and precious moments.

Identifying the symptoms of ovarian cancer (stomach pain, bloating, feeling full more quickly, and needing to wee more frequently) is currently the best way to diagnose the disease but most symptoms present in later stages when cancer has begun to spread around the body and the chance of a woman surviving beyond five years from her diagnosis drops to as low as 4%.

The charity has today [1 March 2018] launched the ‘Stolen Moments’ campaign, a drive to highlight the devastating effect of ovarian cancer, raise awareness of its symptoms and launch its £1million fundraising campaign dedicated to early detection of the disease. Ovarian Cancer Action hopes to develop a screening tool and replicate the success of cervical screening, which has almost halved the number of cervical cancer cases in Great Britain since it was first implemented in the 1980s.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Katherine Taylor, chief executive of Ovarian Cancer Action, said:

“When a woman is diagnosed with ovarian cancer, the odds are stacked against her. Recurrence is high and survival rates are poor; no woman should live in fear of either.

“There is currently no screening tool for ovarian cancer and we want to change that. Our scientists want to develop a screening tool that will detect pre-cancerous cells that can be treated before they develop into ovarian cancer.

“We only have to look at the success of cervical screening to understand that early detection saves lives. To be clear, cervical screening does not detect ovarian cancer – which is why we are determined to develop a similar process to prevent women developing ovarian cancer. Investing in medical research will give future generations more time with the ones they love.”

Professor Ahmed, whose research at the Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine at Oxford University is funded by Ovarian Cancer Action, said:

“We now know a significant proportion of ovarian cancers arise from the fallopian tubes. That’s a relatively new discovery. Next we need to pinpoint the exact location in which pre-cancerous calls develop into cancerous ones, and then identify a change in the cells in order to detect and remove them as early as possibly so women won’t go on to develop cancer.”

This summer will mark five years since Lisa Harrop’s mother Elaine died of ovarian cancer aged 65. Lisa said:

“It still comes as a shock knowing that I will never hear my mum’s voice again. I always thought my mum would live to a ripe old age like most of the women in her family, not die at the young age of 65.

“People tell you that time is a great healer, and it is, you go about your daily life and live it, but every now and again you get stopped in your tracks, something reminds you of your mum and it is on these days that you wish you could have just one more day but know that you never will.”

Almost two decades are stolen from a woman who dies of ovarian cancer in the UK. A screening tool would change this. Help Ovarian Cancer Action raise £1million to protect future generations – visit [www.ovarian.org.uk](http://www.ovarian.org.uk) or Text OVCA12 plus the amount you would like to donate to 70070.

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**Notes to editors**

**Advice from Jo Stanford cancer prevention officer at Ovarian Cancer Action:**

Symptoms of ovarian cancer are often mistaken for symptoms of less serious conditions, such as [Irritable Bowel Syndrome](http://ovarian.org.uk/about-ovarian-cancer/what-are-the-symptoms-of-ovarian-cancer#Irritable bowel syndrome - symptoms). Regular experience of the following could be a symptom of ovarian cancer, if you’re worried, speak to your GP.

* Persistent stomach pain
* Persistent bloating
* Difficulty eating/feeling full more quickly
* Needing to wee more frequently

**Ovarian Cancer in the UK: The Facts**

* It is the deadliest gynaecological cancer and the sixth most common cancer among women
* 4,100 women in the UK will die each year from the disease
* The UK has one of the lowest survival rates in Western Europe, with a woman dying from ovarian cancer every two hours
* There are 7,400 new diagnoses each year
* Only 46% of women will survive beyond five years

**About the data**

The figures were calculated by the [Global Health Data Exchange](http://ghdx.healthdata.org/gbd-results-tool?params=gbd-api-2016-permalink/6fc2c5fc2059cb0e0a9d03f0a393dd76) by comparing the age women died of ovarian cancer to the average life expectancy of women in that country.

The 91,658 figure is the total number of years lost to ovarian cancer in 2016 (the most recent figures available). The 90,533 figure is the average number of years lost to ovarian cancer over the last five years (2012-2016).

Full data available on request.

**Ovarian Cancer Action**

Ovarian Cancer Action is the UK’s ovarian cancer research charity and its mission is to fund research that saves lives.

From funding scientists on the front line, to mobilising millions of people across the UK to take action. Ovarian Cancer Action is driven by a vision of a world without ovarian cancer and a belief that it can create a better future.

For more information on ovarian cancer go to [www.ovarian.org.uk](http://www.ovarian.org.uk)

1. Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network. Global Burden of Disease Study 2016 (GBD 2016) Results. Seattle, United States: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cervical-cancer/getting-diagnosed/screening/about> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)