









suggested letter for your doctor

Dear Dr

Rather than take up your time in surgery, I thought I'd drop you a line with this important information, as according to a GP survey, most doctors expressed concern that they had missed cases of ovarian cancer, the fourth most common cancer in women. I am part of a growing number of ovarian cancer survivors who are working with the charity **Ovarian cancer action** to raise the awareness of other women in our local communities of the symptoms of ovarian cancer.



Chances are that your medical textbooks refer to ovarian cancer as a "silent killer" saying symptoms are vague and not detectable until the later stages of the disease. However, important new research in the journal *CANCER* (Jan 07) by Professor Barbara Goff of Washington University (see links below) builds further on studies that show symptoms do exist – even in early stage disease, and that frequency and persistency of symptoms are key to helping to distinguish between ovarian cancer and other less serious conditions such as IBS or menopausal complaints.

Ovarian cancer action have created the ovarian cancer **symptom diary** (based on Goff's symptom findings) aimed at both doctors and women to help track the frequency and persistency of symptoms (see Links). Goff found that the symptoms below are more commonly found in women with ovarian cancer when present more than 12 times during a 4 week episode than in the general female population presenting to primary care:-

-  **abdominal pain**
-  **pelvic pain**
-  **increased abdomen size and persistent "bloating" i.e distension**
-  **difficulty eating a normal meal**
-  **feeling full quickly**
-  **increased frequency/urgency of urination**

Ovarian cancer action has appointed the UK's first Healthcare Project Manager with a specific brief to improve the outcomes for women with ovarian cancer by engaging with the NHS, in particular with primary care. We are currently working at PCT and Cancer Network levels to set up pilot studies into the use of the symptom diaries and symptom messaging. We have been funded by the DH to place a symptom leaflet in every GP surgery in England. Further information about how you can get involved is available from: pcarr@ovarian.org.uk

Links:

-  www.ovarian.org.uk (Go to information for doctors).
-  PubMed (US site): www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed and type in Symptom Index, Goff B for abstract. If you have any other queries contact pcarr@ovarian.org.uk.

Many thanks
Yours sincerely