

22 January 2010



Ovarian Cancer Australia

**MEDIA ALERT – VITAL COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVE**

## **Ovarian Cancer Australia Launches Awareness Month - February 2010**

**An initiative of Ovarian Cancer Australia**

***“Every woman needs to know the symptoms of ovarian cancer.  
Don’t leave it until the 11<sup>th</sup> Hour!”***

### **Launch Event**

Date: Monday 1 February 2010  
Time: 9.30 - 10.30 am - **Media call from 9am**  
Venue: BMW Edge, Federation Square, Melbourne  
VIPs: Senator The Hon Stephen Conroy - Minister for Broadband, Communications & Digital Economy  
Nicole Livingstone OAM - Patron of Ovarian Cancer Australia  
Ms Paula Benson - Director of Ovarian Cancer Australia and ovarian cancer survivor  
Ms Jean Kittson - Ambassador for Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month 2010  
Simon Lee - Chairman of Ovarian Cancer Australia  
Debbie Lee - Ovarian Cancer Survivor

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On February 1 Ovarian Cancer Australia will launch Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month 2010 to help save lives by raising awareness of the symptoms of ovarian cancer as well as raising vital funds to provide support for those touched by ovarian cancer.

Every 11 hours an Australian woman will die from ovarian cancer. A Pap test does not detect the disease. There is no early detection test and while ovarian cancer is often considered a silent killer scientific evidence shows that many women DO experience symptoms that if acted on, could result in an earlier diagnosis and a better chance of beating the disease.

Awareness of ovarian cancer and its symptoms is vital for every Australian woman of any age because every day ovarian cancer affects someone’s partner, someone’s sister, someone’s daughter or someone’s mother.

Paula Benson, Director of Ovarian Cancer Australia said, “During Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, our message to every Australian woman is clear: Don’t leave learning the symptoms of ovarian cancer until the 11th Hour!”

The Hon Senator Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications & Digital Economy, will launch Ovarian Cancer Australia’s new ‘Family & Friends’ program. The Minister’s wife, Paula Benson, is an ovarian cancer survivor and a Director of Ovarian Cancer Australia.

Nicole Livingstone explained the care offered by Ovarian Cancer Australia for women diagnosed with the disease. “Ovarian Cancer Australia plays such a critical role in supporting women with ovarian cancer throughout Australia. Whilst other organisations are chasing a detection test which could be years away, with 1500 women newly diagnosed with ovarian cancer in Australia every year, we are here to support these women physically, emotionally and intellectually,” she said.

The event will bring together patients and survivors and their families and friends as well as GPs and gynaecological oncologists to help raise awareness of the disease and help generate vital funds for programmes that support women diagnosed with the disease, and their families.

### **Interview and photo opportunities include:**

- \* Senator The Hon Stephen Conroy - Minister for Broadband, Communications & Digital Economy
- \* Ms Jean Kittson – Ambassador for Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month 2010
- \* Nicole Livingstone OAM - Patron of Ovarian Cancer Australia
- \* Ms Paula Benson - Director of Ovarian Cancer Australia and ovarian cancer survivor
- \* Simon Lee – Chairman of Ovarian Cancer Australia
- \* Ovarian Cancer Survivors
- \* Medical experts on ovarian cancer and current treatments

**ENDS**

**Please contact Insight Communications for more information, photographs or to arrange an interview.**

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## Journalist Notes



### Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month is the initiative of Ovarian Cancer Australia

OvarianCancerAustralia

On February 1, Ovarian Cancer Australia will launch Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month 2010 to help save lives by raising awareness about the symptoms of ovarian cancer and provide support for those touched by ovarian cancer.

- \* In 2010, more than 1500 Australia women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer
- \* More than 850 will die from the disease – that's 1 woman every 11 hours
- \* 75% of women are diagnosed in the advanced stages and will not live beyond 5 years
- \* Ovarian cancer is the 6th most common cause of cancer death in Australian women
- \* Ovarian cancer can affect women of all ages – girls as young as 7 have been diagnosed. But the risk of getting ovarian cancer increases with age. The average age for an ovarian cancer diagnosis is 64
- \* There is no detection test – a Pap smear does NOT detect ovarian cancer
- \* The majority of Australian women DON'T know the symptoms of ovarian cancer but almost all women with ovarian cancer suffer symptoms
- \* To ensure a good chance of survival it is essential that ovarian cancer is caught in the early stages
- \* If found in the early stages, the majority of women will be alive and well after five years
- \* Awareness of symptoms is the principle means of early diagnosis to save lives!
- \* With the help of the media, we aim to save lives by educating women about the symptoms of ovarian cancer. We aim to inform them about what to do if they have symptoms, empowering them to manage their health

### Who is Ovarian Cancer Australia?

Ovarian Cancer Australia is a national not-for-profit organisation providing support and advocacy for people affected by ovarian cancer, and is the peak body for ovarian cancer awareness and prevention. Our programs are focused in these important areas:

- \* Promoting awareness of ovarian cancer and its symptoms in the community – giving Australian women and their healthcare providers a better understanding of the early signs of ovarian cancer
- \* Providing support networks and resources to women and their families and friends affected by ovarian cancer
- \* Advocating with medical professionals, government and the media for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer
- \* We are the only organisation that works with Australian women, their families and friends who have been affected by ovarian cancer

### Ovarian Cancer Australia Exists To:

- \* Save women's lives by raising awareness of the symptoms of ovarian cancer
- \* Support those touched by ovarian cancer
- \* Be the voice of ovarian cancer awareness and prevention in Australia

## How Many Women In Australia Have Ovarian Cancer?

- \* 1 in 70 Australian women will develop ovarian cancer in their lifetime. Each year, more than 850 Australian women will lose their battle with ovarian cancer – that's one woman every 11 hours.

## What Is The Life Expectancy For A Woman Diagnosed With Ovarian Cancer?

- \* 75% of women are diagnosed in the advanced stages and will not live beyond 5 years. If diagnosed early, the majority of those women will survive. This is why awareness and early detection is so important.

## Who Is At Risk Of Developing Ovarian Cancer?

Factors that are considered to increase the risk of ovarian cancer are:

- \* Age – women over the age of 45 are at greater risk of developing ovarian cancer. However, it affects women of all ages - ovarian cancer has been diagnosed in girls as young as 7
- \* Never having taken the contraceptive pill
- \* Having few or no pregnancies
- \* A high-fat diet, being overweight and smoking
- \* A history of cancer in the family, especially ovarian, breast or some bowel cancers (approximately 10% of all ovarian cancer cases are due to an inherited gene fault and these are found in 1 in 500 people in Australia)
- \* Being of Ashkenazi Jewish descent

## Facts About Ovarian Cancer In Australia

- \* This year, 1500 women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer; more than 850 will die from the disease
- \* There is no reliable early detection test for ovarian cancer
- \* The majority of Australian women do not know the symptoms of ovarian cancer
- \* Ovarian cancer is the 6th most common cause of cancer death in Australian women

## What Are The Symptoms Of Ovarian Cancer?

The four most frequently reported symptoms from women diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer are:

- \* Persistent abdominal pain or pelvic (lower abdominal) pain
- \* A noticeable increase in abdominal size or abdominal bloating
- \* Needing to rush to the toilet to urinate often or urgently
- \* Feeling full quickly or finding it difficult to eat

Other symptoms that have been commonly reported by women with ovarian cancer include:

- \* Vague but persistent stomach upsets such as wind, nausea, heart burn or indigestion
- \* Vaginal bleeding
- \* Change in bowel habits
- \* Weight loss or weight gain
- \* Excessive fatigue

If these symptoms persist even after prescribed treatment for other more common conditions (for example irritable bowel syndrome), women should ask their GP to consider the possibility of ovarian cancer. Ovarian Cancer Australia provides free symptom diaries to download from their website so that women can track what they are experiencing and be able to better communicate with their GP.

## Is There A Test For Ovarian Cancer?

- \* No! There is NO early detection screening test for ovarian cancer. A Pap smear does NOT detect Ovarian cancer. This is why awareness of the symptoms is critical to Australian women

## **How Is Ovarian Cancer Diagnosed?**

- \* Ovarian cancer can only be confirmed at the point of surgery. If ovarian cancer is suspected, a GP will recommend tests which can suggest if ovarian cancer is a possibility, these include the CA125 test, and a trans-vaginal ultrasound, but these tests cannot be used to screen for or diagnose ovarian cancer.

## **How Is It Treated?**

- \* When ovarian cancer is confirmed during surgery, a total hysterectomy (removal of the uterus), bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy (removal of the fallopian tubes and ovaries on both sides), omentectomy (removal of the fatty tissue that covers the bowels), lymphadenectomy (removal of one or more lymph nodes) may be performed.

## **Awareness Is The Key To Saving Lives - We Raise Awareness By Promoting:**

- \* Australia's annual awareness month is February
- \* 2010 Teal Ribbon Day is Wednesday 24 February
- \* Teal is the international colour representing ovarian cancer

## **About Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month**

- \* Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month is an international campaign to raise awareness of the symptoms of ovarian cancer. In 2010 in Australia Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month is held in February. Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month is also a time when Ovarian Cancer Australia, their volunteers and friends, raise funds for their programs and resources to support women with ovarian cancer and to ensure every woman in Australia knows the symptoms of ovarian cancer.

## **How Do Donations Make A Difference To The Lives Of Women Diagnosed With Ovarian Cancer?**

Donations of \$2.00 or more are gratefully received and fully tax deductible. Donations are critical in helping fund Ovarian Cancer Australia's support programs and resources for patients and their families.

These programs and resources include:

- \* 1300 Referral Line
- \* Support groups for women with ovarian cancer to meet regularly to talk about common issues, share information and provide emotional support to help them cope with diagnosis and treatment
- \* Rural and Regional Tele-Support Group for women who are unable to travel to the support group meetings
- \* An online forum where ovarian cancer sufferers can share their stories and offer advice and support to other sufferers
- \* Symptom Diary – a useful tool for women to track symptoms and better communicate what they are experiencing with their GP
- \* Resilience – a free resource for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer consisting of a diary/journal and an information pack that provides up-to-date information support and advice
- \* "Ovarian Cancer - The Journey" - Patient Resource DVD and "Silent No More" - Community Awareness DVD
- \* Research - Ovarian Cancer Australia also supports the Australian Ovarian Cancer Study, a collaborative research program between clinicians, scientists, patients and advocacy groups aimed at improving the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of ovarian cancer

## **Why Is Teal The Colour We Use For Our Ribbons & Branding?**

- \* Teal is the international colour for ovarian cancer

## How Can I Support Women & Their Families Who Are Battling Ovarian Cancer?

- \* Buy a Teal Ribbon from Ovarian Cancer Australia
- \* Donate to Ovarian Cancer Australia. Donations of \$2.00 or more are gratefully received and fully tax deductible
- \* Host a morning tea or BBQ with your friends and colleagues to raise funds
- \* Distribute a symptom diary or awareness brochures and posters to all the women in your life; awareness saves lives

For more information on ovarian cancer, or to make a tax deductible donation or purchase teal ribbons (minimum quantity of 5 at \$2 each) please contact Ovarian Cancer Australia.

- \* Phone: 1300 660 334
- \* Email: [admin@ovariancancer.net.au](mailto:admin@ovariancancer.net.au)
- \* Website: [ovariancancer.net.au](http://ovariancancer.net.au)

### For Media Enquiries Please Contact:

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