Data briefing on ovarian cancer

December 2018

Target Ovarian Cancer has analysed new government data on ovarian cancer which includes routes to diagnosis, different types of tumour and treatment. This information helps measure the impact of work such as our GP education programme and identify areas where more needs to be done, for example, investing in research into less common types of ovarian cancer or campaigning for improved access to treatment.

What the data shows

Emergency presentation
27 per cent of women with ovarian cancer are diagnosed through an emergency presentation (for example in Accident and Emergency). This can mean that the cancer is diagnosed late and reduce the number of treatment options available. Just over 10 years ago, 31 per cent of women with ovarian cancer were diagnosed through an emergency presentation. Today’s figure is still too high, but shows that our work to raise awareness of the symptoms of ovarian cancer and GP training is paying off.

Over a quarter of women with ovarian cancer are diagnosed in A&E

GP referrals
More women than ever are being diagnosed following a referral from their GP, with the data showing 58 per cent of women diagnosed through this route, compared to 47 per cent just over a decade ago. If a woman visits her GP with symptoms that could be ovarian cancer she should either be sent for diagnostic tests, or be referred straight to hospital if the GP is really worried. We need to see all women diagnosed through a GP referral, rather than Accident and Emergency, as it means women are diagnosed promptly and can start treatment sooner.
Age at diagnosis
Approximately 17 per cent of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer are under 50. While ovarian cancer is more common in older women, it is important to be aware that it can happen at any age and that all women know the symptoms to look out for. Younger women are often diagnosed with slightly different types of tumour and treatment can present additional challenges such as the impact on fertility and early onset menopause.

One in five women diagnosed with ovarian cancer is too sick for treatment

No treatment
20 per cent of women receive no treatment at all. This can be for a number of reasons, the main being that women are too unwell at the point they are diagnosed to start treatment. It is why it is so important we work to get women diagnosed swiftly; even a few weeks can make a difference.

One in ten women are diagnosed with a less common tumour type

Less common tumours
Approximately 13 per cent of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer have a less common tumour type, for example, sex-cord stromal or germ cell ovarian cancer. This is the first time that data has been published showing how many women are diagnosed with these less common tumour types. This is important as it helps ensure the right services and support are in place and demonstrates where more investment in research is needed.

The data
Target Ovarian Cancer worked with Public Health England’s National Cancer Registration and Analysis Service who provided the data on which the above analysis is based. This is part of the ‘Get Data Out’ project aimed at making more data on less common cancers, such as ovarian cancer, publicly available. You can find the full data release at: http://cancerdata.nhs.uk/standardoutput

It’s time to
TAKE OVAR

Raise awareness. Fund research. Save lives.

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