

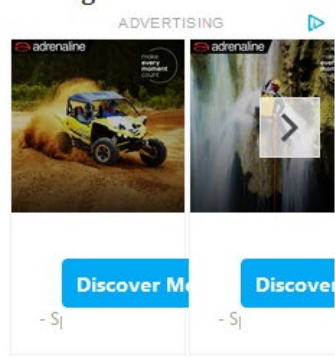
# Ovarian cancer is a silent killer and there's a renewed push for funding and research to find an early-detection test

Michelle Smith

Latest News



Because the symptoms of ovarian cancer can be vague or easily dismissed as other minor complaints, most women are not diagnosed with the cancer until it is advanced and the chances of beating it are much reduced.



TEAL: Ballarat MP Catherine King and ovarian cancer survivor Karen Walsh, who started a support group in Ballarat, at a fundraising morning tea in 2017

Melbourne researchers are working toward a simple blood test to diagnose ovarian cancer and improve the survival rates, particularly for women in regional and rural areas.

Funded in part by the Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation, which this week launched their *State of the Nation in Ovarian Cancer: Research Audit*, a team from RMIT University, the Royal Women's Hospital and Hudson Institute of Medical Research are looking to identify immune markers in the blood that would signal the presence of ovarian cancer.



The hope is that the research will lead to an early detection test, the lack of which was identified in the research audit as the most significant barrier to improving survival rates.

The audit found an early detection test for ovarian cancer could save the lives of more than 8000 Australian women over 10 years but an extra \$20 million of funding each year was needed for ovarian cancer research in Australia to help save women's lives.

Ballarat woman Karen Walsh, who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2016, said early detection would save lives.

Fortunately for Ms Walsh her cancer was detected early and she underwent surgery and six months of chemotherapy.



"I had really vague symptoms and doctors thought I had irritable bowel syndrome, nothing more sinister. My only symptom was one of the less common ones of feeling full after eating a small amount."

After it got to the point where she could not even keep water down, she went to emergency at St John of God hospital and a CT scan revealed a large tumour.

"I'm fortunate it was caught very early and almost six years later I'm here," she said.

"Not everyone is that fortunate and one of those reasons is because there's no early detection. We have the cervical cancer vaccine and pap smears done regularly but we don't have early detection tests for ovarian cancer and it's usually found too late."

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**Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance** @ocrahope

Do you know the #symptoms of #ovariancancer? Share for #WellnessWednesday

### SYMPTOMS OF OVARIAN CANCER

- Bloating
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
- Urinary symptoms (urgency & frequently)

See your doctor, preferably a gynecologist, if you have these symptoms more than 12 times during the course of one month and the symptoms are new or unusual for you. Experts suggest a combination pelvic/rectal exam, a CA-125 blood test and a transvaginal ultrasound.

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Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation Chief Executive Officer Lucinda Nolan said limited funding in the modern cancer era has stifled breakthroughs, with the five-year survival rate for ovarian cancer stagnating at 46 per cent.

"This compares with 91 per cent for breast cancer, 83 per cent for uterine cancer and 71 per cent for cervical cancer."

Ms Nolan said it was vital research was funded even during the financially stretched times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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"We appreciate COVID-19 is having a huge impact on people's livelihoods and times are tough financially - but for many, it has also crystallised what is most important: those we love," she said.

"Ovarian cancer is not going away just because we are facing a pandemic. History shows that where communities, governments and industry come together, big improvements in survival can be realised and countless lives saved.

"While ovarian cancer has been left behind in the past 45 years of modern cancer research, with a similar focus and funding uplift it can be the success story of the next generation."

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