

MEDIA RELEASE - Monday, 22 February 2010

Ovarian Cancer Australia's Teal Ribbon Day on Wednesday 24th February to Lead the World in 2010 International Ovarian Cancer Awareness Initiatives

***“Every woman needs to know the symptoms of ovarian cancer.
Don't leave it until the 11th Hour!”***

On February 24, Ovarian Cancer Australia will officially launch its Teal Ribbon Day at the Health Wealth & Style event in Sydney, continuing its international leadership role in generating awareness of ovarian cancer in 2010, to help save lives by informing women of the symptoms of a disease that will kill more than 850 Australian women this year – that's one woman every 11 hours!

Teal is the colour that represents ovarian cancer throughout the world. On the eve of Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month in Europe and the United Kingdom, Australia's Teal Ribbon Day on February 24 (an initiative of Ovarian Cancer Australia) will be the first in an international awareness campaign in 2010 aimed at informing women globally about ovarian cancers signs and symptoms which could save their lives.

Every day ovarian cancer affects Australian women of all ages - someone's partner, someone's sister, someone's daughter, someone's friend or someone's mother. Girls as young as 7 and young women in the prime of their lives have been diagnosed with the disease. And while the risk of ovarian cancer increases with age (average age for an ovarian cancer diagnosis is 64) the fact is that the majority of Australian women DON'T know the symptoms of ovarian cancer but almost ALL women with the disease do suffer symptoms.

Paula Benson, Director of Ovarian Cancer Australia and a survivor of ovarian cancer said, “In the past ovarian cancer has often been referred to as a ‘silent killer’ but we now know that it is NOT silent because scientific evidence has shown that many women DO experience symptoms that if acted on, could result in an earlier diagnosis and a better chance of beating the disease.

“Ovarian cancer is the 6th most common cause of cancer death among Australian women today. Because there is no early detection test, currently 75% of women are diagnosed when the cancer is in the advanced stages and tragically, will lose their battle with the disease. The sad reality is that if diagnosed earlier, the majority of these women would have had a better chance of survival. This is why awareness and early detection is critical in saving lives,” Ms Benson said.

“We know that if ovarian cancer is caught in the early stages by identifying the signs and symptoms and seeking treatment early, the majority of women will be alive and well and able to enjoy life, family and friends for more than five years and beyond,” she said.

Jean Kittson, ambassador for the Ovarian Cancer Australia 2010 campaign said, “Awareness of ovarian cancer and its symptoms is vital. More and more women are coming to understand breast cancer and cervical cancer prevention and detection. Self breast examination and diagnostic screening programs such as mammograms and Pap tests are valuable tools in early diagnosis that saves lives. However, not enough women understand this is not the case for ovarian cancer. A Pap test does NOT detect the disease - there is NO early detection test. Only knowing and recognising the symptoms of ovarian cancer can help save lives,” Ms Kittson said.

“We have a long way to go but the principal aim of this campaign is to reduce the number of deaths from ovarian cancer by making women aware of the symptoms so they seek advice and treatment in the early stages of the disease when there is a greater chance of long-term survival.”

Ms Kittson said, “With one Australian woman dying every 11 hours from this insidious disease, on Teal Ribbon Day, our main message to women, from all walks of life, all cultural backgrounds and all parts of Australia is clear; Please, learn the symptoms of ovarian cancer – Don't leave it until the 11th hour!”

The most common four symptoms which women with ovarian cancer experience frequently and persistently are: pelvic and abdominal pain, increased abdominal size/persistent bloating, increased urinary frequency, and difficulty eating and/or feeling full quickly.

If these symptoms persist even after prescribed treatment for other more common conditions (for example irritable bowel syndrome), we urge women to ask their GP to consider the possibility of ovarian cancer.

To monitor symptoms, 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 how they are feeling with their GP.

To learn the risks, signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer or to make a tax deductible donation please visit www.ovariancancer.net.au. Don't leave it until the eleventh hour!

Teal Ribbon Day is also about raising vital funds to help Ovarian Cancer Australia to continue to provide essential support services for women and families touched by ovarian cancer.

Teal ribbons can be purchased for \$2.00 from Napoleon Perdis concept stores and Ovarian Cancer Australia. Funds raised through Teal Ribbon Day will continue the work of Ovarian Cancer Australia – Founded in 2001.

Ovarian Cancer Australia's Health, Wealth & Style event is the premier event on Sydney's social calendar and synonymous with sophistication while at the same time designed to inform women on three critical aspects of living well; how to manage their health, their wealth and their style.

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
- * Website: ovariancancer.net.au

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To arrange an interview or request a photograph, please contact Insight Communications.

Opportunities include:

- * Ms Jean Kittson - Ambassador for Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month 2010
- * Simon Lee - Chairman of Ovarian Cancer Australia
- * Ovarian Cancer Survivors
- * Medical experts on ovarian cancer and current treatments

Detailed information about the signs, symptoms and treatment of ovarian cancer are included on in this media kit.

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

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JEAN KITTON

Ambassador - Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month 2010

Jean Kittson is one of Australia's best known and most popular comedians. She is a performer and writer whose television shows include the Big Gig, Kittson Fahey, Let The Blood Run Free, Good News Week, Flat Chat, Glasshouse, The Great Debates and The Einstein Factor.

She is a regular guest on Richard Glover's Thank God It's Friday Show On 702 Sydney (2BL). Her most recent film role was with Delta Goodrem in Hating Alison Ashley.

She is a magazine columnist who has written for New Weekly, The Sunday Telegraph, and The Sydney Morning Herald's Sydney Magazine and is currently a columnist with Readers Digest Health Smart Magazine. She is the author of the Penguin best seller, Tongue Lashing. She is also a firm favourite on the corporate speaker's circuit.



Journalist Notes

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month is the initiative of Ovarian Cancer Australia

February 24 is Teal Ribbon Day, an initiative of Ovarian Cancer Australia as part of an awareness campaign in 2010 to help save lives by raising awareness of 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 principal 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.

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