

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until Monday, 14 Jun, 9.30am



Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month (OCAM) June 2010

**Wear the teal ribbon to show your support for the fight against “the silent killer”.
Until there is a test, awareness is best!**

SINGAPORE - In recognising the importance of raising awareness about ovarian cancer, the Singapore Cancer Society together with the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS) and the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCC) will be embarking on a month-long campaign to remind women that ovarian cancer remains the deadliest of gynaecologic cancers and that early detection is the best chance of surviving the disease.

"Through this awareness program, we would like to show our support and commitment to women who are battling this malady and their families. By learning more about the risk factors and early warning symptoms of ovarian cancer, we hope that more women will present at earlier stages and increase their chance of cure," says Dr Lim Soon Thye, Chairman of the Singapore Cancer Society's Medical Screening/Public Education Sub-Committee, Deputy Head and Senior Consultant, Department of Medical Oncology, National Cancer Centre Singapore.

Ovarian cancer is presently the fifth most frequent cancer among Singapore women, after breast, colorectal, lung and uterine cancers. A steady increase in frequency has been observed over the last 30 years. In Singapore, the rates for ovarian cancer fall between those of Western Europe and the rest of Asia¹.

Facts about Ovarian Cancer

Among the gynaecologic cancers (cervix, uterus and ovary), ovarian cancer is the most lethal because the majority of patients have advanced disease at diagnosis. Each year in Singapore an average of about 94 women will die from ovarian cancer. Approximately 1 in 88 women in Singapore will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer in her lifetime and her overall risk of succumbing to the disease is more than 35%.

The vast majority of women are at average risk of developing ovarian cancer while about 10% of women are at increased risk due to genetic factors such as a strong family history of breast and/or ovarian cancers or if they are known to carry specific cancer genes. Women in the “average risk” category, unfortunately, do not have an effective method for routine population screening for ovarian cancer.

¹ Trends in Cancer Incidence in Singapore, Singapore Cancer Registry

Know the symptoms

The majority of women with ovarian cancer have vague and non-specific pelvic, abdominal and menstrual symptoms. Symptoms include pelvic or abdominal pain, urinary frequency or urgency, increased abdominal size or bloating, and difficulty eating or feeling full.

These symptoms are particularly suspicious if they are present for more than 2 weeks. As the symptoms are typically ambiguous, they can be mistaken for other conditions such as indigestion or “wind” and may be ignored for some time. This will lead to a delayed diagnosis or an initial wrong diagnosis.

When a correct diagnosis is made, two-thirds of patients will be found to be in advanced stage of ovarian cancer that has spread beyond the ovaries to surrounding organs, the abdominal cavity or to the lungs. Survival depends greatly on the stage at diagnosis. Patients at Stage 1 have a 5 year survival rate of around 90% while patients diagnosed at Stage 3 or 4 have only about 20-30% chance of surviving 5 years. There is also evidence to show that patients with ovarian cancer have better outcomes when their treatment is centralised at subspecialty cancer centres.

Associate Professor Jeffrey Low, Chairman, Ovarian Cancer Awareness Organising Committee, Head of Gynaecologic Oncology at NCIS and Senior Consultant, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, National University Hospital says, “Unfortunately, since many of the symptoms of ovarian cancer often mimic other less life threatening diseases, an early diagnosis may be overlooked. By helping women to recognize the symptoms, and monitor their persistency, women can become stronger advocates for their own health.”

The most useful strategy at present is for women to be aware of the symptoms of ovarian cancer and to seek medical attention when these symptoms are persistent. Healthcare personnel should also be aware and have a high index of suspicion for persistent symptoms such as those mentioned above and initiate correct investigations to rule out ovarian cancer.

The Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month (OCAM)

Wear teal this month as a symbolic gesture of solidarity with this cause.

The OCAM campaign has been initiated with the following objectives:

1. To raise the profile and awareness of Ovarian Cancer in women
2. To educate the public on Ovarian Cancer and provide general information on the disease.

Activities include:

Public Forum

To further raise awareness of the disease, a public forum will be held on Sat, 19 Jun at the Kallang Community Club, 45 Boon Keng Road.

Ms Ellen Lee, MP for Sembawang GRC will be gracing the occasion as the Guest-of-Honour.

Topics at the Forum include “How do I know I have Ovarian Cancer” and “How best can I be treated for Ovarian Cancer”. There will also be a sharing session by a survivor who will relate the experience she went through.

The session in English will be held from 1.30pm to 3.00 pm and the one conducted in Mandarin will be held from 3.30pm to 5.30pm.

National University Hospital

Event	Date
Lunchtime talk by APN Joyce Er on Ovarian Cancer	Wed, 23 Jun
TEAL (Totally Empowered, Actively Living) Support Group Outing	Sat, 26 Jun

Singapore General Hospital

Event	Date
O&G Newsletter featuring Ovarian Cancer by Dr Cindy Pang	June

KK Women's and Children's Hospital

Event	Date
Lunchtime talk	Wed, 9 Jun

The OCAM organising committee and sponsoring institutions include:

1. Singapore Cancer Society
2. National University Cancer Institute, Singapore
3. National Cancer Centre Singapore
4. National University Hospital
5. Singapore General Hospital
6. KK Women's and Children's Hospital

About Singapore Cancer Society (www.singaporecancersociety.org.sg)

Established in 1964, Singapore Cancer Society is a self-funded voluntary welfare organisation which provides patient care services to needy cancer patients through its welfare, hospice home care, cancer treatment subsidy and rehabilitation support programmes. In addition, the Society also provides free cancer screening services and promotes cancer awareness and prevention through its public education and community outreach programmes.

About the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (www.ncis.com.sg)

The National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS) offers a broad spectrum of cancer care and management covering both paediatric and adult cancers, with expertise in prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care. The Institute's strength lies in the multidisciplinary approach taken to develop a comprehensive and personalised plan for each cancer patient and his or her family.

NCIS draws on the expertise of our specialists in the fields of haematology-oncology, radiation oncology, gynaecologic oncology, paediatric oncology, surgical oncology, oncology nursing, oncology pharmacy, palliative care, pathology, radiology, medical specialties including gastroenterology and hepatology, infectious diseases, pulmonary and critical care, psychiatry; epidemiology and public health as well as other allied health sciences.

With several award-winning clinician-scientists and clinician-investigators, NCIS has an international reputation in translational research and clinical trials, providing patients with access to promising breakthroughs in cancer diagnostics, technology and therapies. NCIS is also closely affiliated with the Cancer Science Institute of Singapore, National University of Singapore.

The Institute's outreach efforts include prevention and screening programmes to reduce cancer mortality and to diagnose the disease at its most treatable stage.

About the National University Hospital (NUH) (www.nuh.com.sg)

The National University Hospital (NUH), a member of the National University Health System (NUHS), is a tertiary specialist hospital that provides advanced, leading-edge medical care and services. Equipped with state-of-the-art facilities as well as dedicated and well-trained staff, the NUH is a major referral centre that delivers tertiary care for a wide range of medical and dental specialties including Cardiology, Gastroenterology and Hepatology, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Oncology, Ophthalmology, Paediatrics and Orthopaedic Surgery. It is the principal teaching hospital of the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine. The Department of

Obstetrics and Gynaecology in NUH is the host department for the Metabolic Disease Translational and Clinical Research Flagship Programme, DevOS.

With combined resources from the teaching hospital and NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and Faculty of Dentistry, the NUH will be able to meet the healthcare needs of patients, train future generations of doctors more effectively, and help develop solutions to our healthcare problems through research.

Backed by substantive expertise and experience, the NUH was chosen by the Ministry of Health to develop two new national specialist centres, the National University Heart Centre, Singapore and National University Cancer Institute, Singapore to meet the growing need for cardiac and cancer treatments.

In 2004, the NUH became the first Singapore hospital to receive Joint Commission International (JCI) Accreditation, an international stamp for excellent clinical practices in patient care and safety. It was also the first hospital in Singapore to receive a triple ISO certification concurrently for Quality, Environmental, and Occupational Health & Safety Management Systems in 2002.

About The National Cancer Centre Singapore (www.nccs.com.sg)

The National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) is the premier cancer research and treatment facility in Singapore and in the region. It was established in 1999 and sees about 68% of the public sector medical oncology cases and about 65% of radiation oncology cases. NCCS not only houses the most number of oncologists in Singapore but is also equipped with the largest number of equipment to provide the latest radiation oncology care in Singapore.

About the Singapore General Hospital (www.sgh.com.sg)

Singapore General Hospital (SGH) is Singapore's oldest and largest acute tertiary hospital and national referral centre. Dedicated to providing multidisciplinary medical care and backed by state-of-the-art facilities, it offers team-based quality patient care that is widely acknowledged to be amongst the best in the world.

Established in 1821, SGH is Singapore's public sector flagship hospital. Specialties like Plastic Surgery (Burns), Renal Medicine, Nuclear Medicine, Pathology and Haematology have been established as national referral centres.

With its 29 clinical specialties, SGH is also a seat of medical education and a centre of research for innovative treatments and medical breakthroughs. SGH is the largest teaching hospital in Asia and second largest in the world to be accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI).

KK Women's and Children's Hospital (www.kkh.com.sg)

KK Women's and Children's Hospital has evolved over the decades, since its founding in 1858, into a regional leader in Obstetrics, Gynaecology, Paediatrics and Neonatology. Today, the 830-bed hospital is a referral centre providing tertiary services to handle high-risk conditions in women and children. More than 400 specialists adopt a multi-disciplinary and holistic approach to treatment, and harness the latest innovations and technology for the best medical care possible. As an academic healthcare institution, the Hospital has adopted a culture of innovation as it strives for world-class clinical leadership. KKH also aims to provide a pleasant hospital experience – one where patients receive seamless service and enjoy the warmth of compassionate care in a healing environment.