

Ovarian cancer is a disease that causes uncontrolled ovarian cell growth, leading to malignant tumors on one or both ovaries. Ovarian cancer is the 5<sup>th</sup> leading cause of cancer death in women, according to the American Cancer Society.

Early detection is the key to a successful treatment for ovarian cancer. However, early symptoms of ovarian cancer are difficult to detect due to their similarity to digestive and bladder disorders. Because of this, many women are not diagnosed until the cancer has advanced to other tissues and organs. Symptoms include abdominal pressure or fullness, urinary urgency, and pelvic pain, which are persistent and gradually worsen. Causes of ovarian cancer are largely unknown, but may be related to the monthly repair of ovarian tissue that occurs after ovulation. Research has shown that pregnancy and use of oral contraceptives may reduce the risk of ovarian cancer. Treatment involves surgical removal of the effected ovary and chemotherapy, both of which may cause infertility. Patients should seek medical advice if they experience persistent abdominal swelling, bloating, or pelvic pain or if they have a family history of ovarian cancer.

#### Resources at Northwestern for Ovarian Cancer

Northwestern University's National Ovarian Cancer Early Detection Program (NOCEDP) is a collaborative program between Northwestern University, The Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center, and the Na-

tional Cancer Institute. Headed by Drs. Lee Shulman, MD and Diljeet Singh, MD, the focus is to identify women at increased risk for ovarian cancer and develop new technologies for early detection. A comprehensive approach to early detection and treatment is offered by combining fields of gynecologic oncology, genetics, ultrasonography, biochemistry and molecular biology. NOCEDP researchers are dedicated to translating advances in laboratory research into effective treatments, detection technology, prevention strategies and therapeutic techniques for patients in the program. The clinical program provides innovative, multidisciplinary care to women with a family history of gynecologic cancer or with a personal history of breast, colon, or gynecologic cancer. Click to see physician profiles and clinic information:

- <http://www.nmff.org/findPhysician/physearch.asp>
- <http://www.nmff.org/ClinicalMedical/department.asp?id=15>
- <http://www.nmff.org/ClinicalMedical/department.asp?id=60>

#### IWHR Highlighted Researcher

Dr. Julian Schink is the Division Chief of Gynecologic Oncology at the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center and a Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Feinberg School of Medicine. He is Vice President of the Society of Gynecologic Oncologists, a member of the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation, and has been featured in Good Housekeeping and Ladies Home Journal as one of the nation's Best Doctors for Women.

Dr. Schink has been a principal investigator on several clinical trials related to ovarian cancer, specifically on chemotherapy for the treatment of ovarian cancer. Currently, Dr. Schink is working on a number of gynecologic oncology projects, including a clinical trial involving treatment for patients with stage III or stage IV ovarian epithelial cancer. This particular study is a multi-center clinical trial to test the capabilities of three different combinations of chemotherapy drugs. The three combinations will be compared based primarily on the survival of patients, but also on the incidence of toxicity and patient's quality of life. The goal of Dr. Schink's project is to find the most effective treatment for women with late-stage ovarian cancer.

#### Useful Links and Resources:

- <http://www.ovarian.org/Default.aspx>
- <http://www.ovarian.org/Divisions/Division.aspx?CName=ILNV&CPID=1>
- <http://www.ovariancancer.org/>
- <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/ovarian>
- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ovariancancer.html>

#### Upcoming Conferences/Symposiums:

Gilda's Club Top Doctor Lecture Series *Robots and the Use of Minimally Invasive Surgery to Treat Gynecologic Cancers* at Gilda's Club, 537 N. Wells Street, Chicago, IL September 30, 2008; 6:30pm – 7:30 pm.

<http://www.cancer.northwestern.edu/events/gildas.cfm>

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