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Charity launches Hereditary Cancer Risk Tool to reduce ovarian cancer in the UK

Ovarian Cancer Action launches its Hereditary Cancer Risk Tool: ***ovarian.org.uk/risktool***

Around 15% of ovarian cancer cases are linked to genetic mutations such as BRCA1, BRCA2 and Lynch Syndrome[1], which increase an individual's likelihood of developing ovarian and other cancers. This equates to over 1,000 women a year in the UK whose lives could potentially be saved.

Ovarian Cancer Action has developed its Hereditary Cancer Risk Tool to help people identify their cancer risk. The charity believes everyone has the right to understand if their family history puts them at risk of ovarian and other cancers, as well as the risk-reducing options available.

The tool asks a series of questions regarding an individual's familial history of cancer and compares answers to the national testing eligibility guidelines. It then, if necessary, clearly explains next steps should an individual choose to pursue testing on the NHS, and reminds every user of the importance of symptoms awareness regardless of their genetic status.

The new tool makes a timely arrival following Theresa May's ambitious announcement just a few weeks ago, calling on the NHS, Artificial Intelligence sector and health charities to work together to prevent 22,000 deaths each year by 2033.[2] The Prime Minister focused the grand challenge on four cancers commonly diagnosed at a late stage, including ovarian cancer.

Genetic mutations can be passed down through the male or female line to future generations. The general population has a 1 in 400 to 1 in 800 chance of having a BRCA gene mutation. This increases to 1 in 40 in those with Jewish heritage.[3]

When primary school teacher Laura Moses, 28, from London, found out she carried the BRCA1 gene mutation, she was able to trace it back through generations of her family history. Just one year later she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She now blogs about her experience at findingcyril.com.

Laura, said: "BRCA has come from my great-grandfather's side of the family. He had five sisters; two died of breast cancer and three died of ovarian cancer. I'm almost now a voice for those women who came before me in my family who had no idea of the mutation they carried that put them at risk of these cancers" said Laura. "There is not one minute where I question my decision to get tested. It meant I was able to get regular checks. It was very tough to find out about the mutation at age 26, but it allowed me to make choices about my body. We have to remember that knowledge is power."

Joanne Stanford, Hereditary Cancer Specialist at Ovarian Cancer Action and co-creator of the Hereditary Cancer Risk Tool, said: "Every time a person with a genetic mutation is diagnosed with ovarian cancer, it represents a cancer prevention failure. Along with genetic counsellors, we want to ensure individuals can make informed decisions around surveillance, preventative surgeries and its considerations, such as family planning. Genetic testing is one of our strongest weapons in the fight against this disease. To understand your risk of hereditary cancer, visit **ovarian.org.uk/risktool**. All you need is a few minutes and some information about your family history of cancer; it could change your life."

Dr Jonathan Krell, Senior Clinical Lecturer in Medical Oncology at Imperial College, said: "Improving the way we select patients for cancer screening and prevention programs, and identifying those people at higher risk of developing cancer is crucial to improving survival rates. This tool will help to increase awareness of genetic abnormalities that people may have been born with that increase their risk of developing cancer, and will encourage more people to consider pursuing genetic testing. The more we know about a person's risk of developing cancer, the more we can do to try and detect it earlier or prevent it from occurring at all through the use drugs or surgery. Optimising prevention measures in this group of women is crucial in reducing the rate of deaths from cancer and I believe risk tools such as this will have a significant impact on public health."

To explore your hereditary cancer risk, visit: **ovarian.org.uk/risktool**

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For case studies or further information, email Tori@ovarian.org.uk or call 020 7380 1735

Ovarian Cancer Action is the UK's ovarian cancer research charity and its mission is to fund research that saves lives.

From funding scientists on the front line, to mobilising millions of people across the UK to take action. Ovarian Cancer Action is driven by a vision of a world without ovarian cancer and a belief that it can create a better future.

For more information on ovarian cancer go to www.ovarian.org.uk

[1] "Up to 1 in 6 (15 per cent) of people diagnosed with ovarian cancers may have inherited a harmful BRCA mutation. This accounts for 1020 of the 6800 cases of ovarian cancer diagnosed every year in the UK." (Peto J et al.,1999, Anglian Breast Cancer Study Group 2000, Walsh T et al., 1995, Ford D et al., 1995 Cancer Research, 2014)." (page 6)

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-science-and-modern-industrial-strategy-21-may-2018

[3]Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer Due to Mutations in BRCA1 and BRCA2, Nancie Petrucelli, Mary B Daly & Gerald L Feldman, Genetics in Medicine volume 12, pages 245–259 (2010)

[4]The Hereditary Cancer Risk Tool has been developed by Hactar, a design studio focused on social change and tech for good. hactar.is