



Mike Hedges AM
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

17th October 2016

Dear Mr Hedges,

Thank you for requesting Ovarian Cancer Action's views on the evidence the Petitions Committee received on 27th September with regards to "Support Yearly Screening for Ovarian Cancer (CA 125 blood test)".

We recently wrote to Vaughan Gething (Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport), about many of the issues raised during the petition committee on the 13th September. Ovarian Cancer Action's view with regards to the CA125 blood test are based on the latest research and are very similar to the evidence received by the committee on 27th September.

Ovarian cancer is the UK's biggest gynaecological killer, killing a woman every two hours. Women who are diagnosed early have a much greater chance of survival, and far too many women are still diagnosed at stage 3 of the disease. Unfortunately there is currently no proven, effective screening process for Ovarian Cancer which leaves awareness of the symptoms, both by patients and clinicians as the most effective tool for early diagnosis and better prognosis.

CA125 is a protein released by ovarian cancer tissue which is often found to be at high levels in the bloodstream in women with ovarian cancer. It is used to diagnose and follow up ovarian tumours before and after treatment. However, to date, it has not been shown to be effective at picking up early stage ovarian cancer, and levels of CA125 can be raised by normal tissues or other conditions, such as endometriosis. Different women have naturally varying levels of CA125, so the same reading could mean different results across patients.

In December last year the UK Collaborative Trial of Ovarian Cancer Screening (UKCTOS) published results on a trial on whether using CA125 as a screening tool could prevent deaths from the disease. While the data showed a possible benefit, the results of the trial concluded that the results were not statistically significant and that further analysis was needed.

Screening tests can have a range of unintended consequences from anxiety to unnecessary surgery in extreme cases. We believe that currently testing levels of CA125 is not yet specific or accurate enough to risk being used as a national screening tool. Funding would be better spent at this time on a national symptoms public awareness campaign.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like to meet to discuss this further.

Kind regards

Scientific Review Panel
Professor Robert Bast Jr MD, Professor Ian Hart, Professor Jonathan Berek MD, Professor Michael Bookman MD, Dr Kenneth Nephew, Dr Michael Seiden MD, Professor Anil Sood MD.

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