



the women's
the royal women's hospital

Media Release

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Ovarian cancer 'journey' at the Women's

The Royal Women's Hospital employs a multi-disciplinary approach to oncology treatment which focuses on the patient's 'journey' as they tackle cancer.

Miss Orla McNally, Director of Gynaecology Oncology at the Women's, said the team approach includes treatment for ovarian cancer.

The Women's is a leader in surgical treatment of this disease, treating 60 to 70 new cases each year. "The oncology team sits down every Tuesday for a group meeting. With the woman's permission, we talk about their care, and we make decisions based on lots of different factors," Miss McNally said.

"When we talk to a woman who has ovarian cancer, we say we are on a journey together. It is unique because we meet them at the beginning and we look after them right through."

Miss McNally said it was unfortunate that ovarian cancer has a high mortality rate. "It is still a very gloomy picture," she said.

"There is no screening for ovarian cancer yet. And, unfortunately, ovarian cancer symptoms are often undetected until the disease is advanced."

If picked up at Stage 1, when the disease has only affected the ovaries, the chances of cure are quite good.

"But the difficulty with ovarian cancer is that it doesn't have to be big in the ovaries before it starts to take off from there.

"Unfortunately, at the moment, the majority of cases are diagnosed at Stage 3 or 4 when it has spread to other parts of the body. The prognosis for those patients is not good."

Miss McNally said, however, that researchers are looking for new screening tools to detect the cancer earlier, and for improved treatments.

One in 70 women will develop ovarian cancer in their lifetime. Every year in Australia around 1500 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer and more than 850 women will die from the disease.

Miss McNally was speaking on ABC Radio to mark the beginning of National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month.

<http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2010/02/01/2806674.htm?site=melbourne>

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