

OPAL NEWS

Ovarian cancer prognosis and lifestyle study



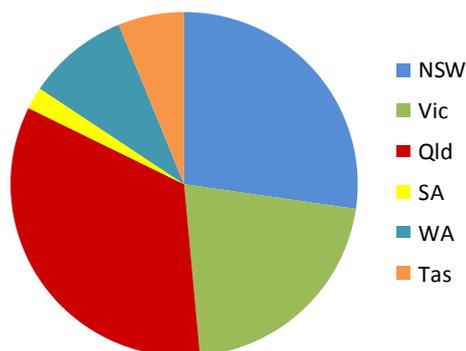
Issue 5 Winter 2015

Welcome to the fifth issue of OPAL News. We have now finished recruiting women into the OPAL study. This process began in June 2012 and since then **973 women have agreed to join the study** – a monumental achievement. The graphs below show where you all come from and where everyone is at in the study. So far you have completed over **5,000 questionnaires, 4,000 MOST questionnaires** and provided **1,100 blood samples** and the first OPAL women have now been in the study for more than 3 years. OPAL is now the largest study of how lifestyle might influence quality of life and outcomes in women with ovarian cancer conducted anywhere in the world. This has all been made possible by the remarkable level of support you have given the study and we are exceedingly grateful for this. We will not be able to do any formal data analysis until later this year when everyone has been in the study for at least 6 months, but we are starting to sort through the information you have given us already to look for patterns. In the meantime, we would like to update you with what has been happening and tell you a bit about our future plans.

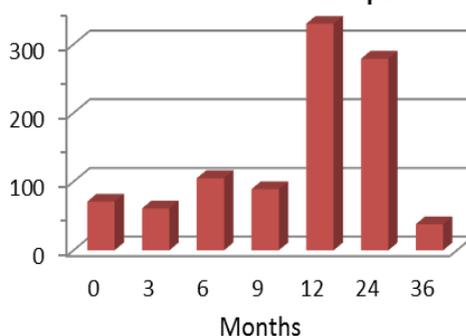
Best wishes,

Principal Investigator

Where OPAL women live



Numbers at different time points



Getting to know some of the OPAL team

Torukiri (Kiri) Ibiebele is the nutritionist working with the OPAL team. Kiri has a PhD from Monash University in Victoria, and has been working at QIMR Berghofer for 10 years. Kiri manages the OPAL nutrition databases and extracts information about all the nutrients from foods and supplements that you report on the diet questionnaires.



QIMR Berghofer
Medical Research Institute

Locked Bag 2000
Royal Brisbane Hospital
Herston, QLD 4029

Freecall: 1800 222 600
opalstudy@qimrberghofer.edu.au

IN THIS ISSUE

Study update

The OPAL team

Medicare

Fundraising

Research - Vitamin D

OncoArray Study

Medicare link



We would like to thank the **588 OPAL women** who have already provided consent for us to access their **Medicare records**. For those of you who have recently joined OPAL or who have not yet had a chance to reply, we have enclosed a letter explaining the Medicare consent process (we ask women for this to help us find out about treatments and medicines that may help prevent ovarian cancer from recurring). If you are happy for us to access your Medicare information we would be grateful if you could complete the consent form and send it back to us in the reply paid envelope. If you do not wish to consent to this aspect of the study, please tick the box on the letter and return it in the reply paid envelope. We plan for the first linkage very soon, so please return your forms as soon as possible.

Thank you

The Brisbane Women's Club Charitable Trust for donating the very generous sum of \$10,000. These funds will allow us to extract DNA from the remaining OPAL samples.



Deryl Jarvie, pictured here on the right with one of the OPAL nurses Sue Brown, is a Queensland OPAL participant. Deryl has made it her quest to raise awareness of ovarian cancer within the community and in April she attended a gathering of 27 women from the Brisbane North Inner Wheel Club, raising valuable funds for cancer research.

New research results about vitamin D and ovarian cancer survival

You've no doubt heard a lot in the media about vitamin D and how it is important for our health. In fact, while we know that vitamin D is important for our bone health, we actually don't know how much we need in our blood. It is also possible that having an optimal vitamin D levels is also important for reducing our risk of, and survival from diseases like cancer but this is by no means certain.

Penny Webb and colleagues have recently published a paper in the prestigious American Journal of Clinical Nutrition which suggested that higher vitamin D concentrations in the blood *at the time of diagnosis* might be associated with longer survival among women with ovarian cancer. This study is however one of the first to investigate this, so we need confirmation from other studies. We also don't know yet if this means that increasing vitamin D concentrations could improve outcomes.

The OncoArray Study

As you know from previous newsletters, we sent some OPAL samples to be part of a large international study looking for new genes that might predict a woman's risk of developing ovarian cancer. This project involved more than 50,000 women worldwide and although the testing is complete, there is still a lot of checking to be done before we will know the first results later this year.

However, while the results will help us understand the genetics of ovarian cancer in general, and may help develop new treatments, it is unlikely that they will have any immediate relevance to individual women. The reason for this is that even if we do identify new genetic changes that appear to be associated with ovarian cancer, we cannot start to do anything about them until we know a lot more about what the genes do and why they are important. If you have asked to get feedback and we do find out anything that might be relevant to you, we will contact you about this.

Note: if you said that you did not want your samples to be used for genetic research or to be given to other scientists for approved studies they have not been included in this study.

