Perspective

# Developments in Ovarian Cancer Research: Progress in Diagnosis and Treatments

## Davide Maio*

*Department of Oncology, University of Turin, Turin, Italy*

## DESCRIPTION

Ovarian cancer is a type of cancer that originates in the ovaries, the female reproductive organs responsible for producing eggs and hormones like estrogen and progesterone. It's a serious and potentially life-threatening disease characterized by the uncontrollable growth of abnormal cells in one or both ovaries.

This form of cancer often goes undetected in its early stages because its symptoms can be subtle and easily mistaken for other less severe conditions. Consequently, ovarian cancer is frequently diagnosed at an advanced stage, making treatment more challenging.

### Epithelial ovarian cancer

This is the most common type, originating in the cells that cover the ovaries.

**Germ cell tumors:** Developing from the cells that produce eggs.

**Stromal tumors:** Arising from the cells that release female hormones.

### Causes and risk factors

While the exact cause of ovarian cancer isn't fully understood, certain risk factors increase its likelihood.

**Genetic predisposition:** Inherited mutations in genes like BRCA1 and BRCA2 significantly increase the risk.

**Age:** Ovarian cancer is more prevalent in older women.

**Reproductive history:** Factors such as never having given birth, starting menstruation early, or reaching menopause late might increase risk.

**Family history:** Having close relatives with ovarian cancer raises the risk.

**Hormonal factors:** Hormone replacement therapy after menopause might slightly increase the risk.

### Signs and symptoms

Ovarian cancer is often called the "silent killer" as early symptoms are vague and easily overlooked. These can include:

• Abdominal bloating or swelling

• Pelvic discomfort or pain

• Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly

• Frequent urination

• Changes in bowel habits

• Diagnosis

Diagnosing ovarian cancer typically involves in,

**Physical examination:** A pelvic exam to check for abnormalities.

**Imaging tests:** Ultrasound, CT scans, or MRI to visualize the ovaries.

**Blood tests:** CA-125 test to measure a protein often elevated in ovarian cancer, although it's not conclusive by itself.

**Biopsy:** A tissue sample is obtained to confirm cancer.

### Treatment options

**Debulking surgery:** Removing as much tumor as possible is often the primary treatment for ovarian cancer.

**Hysterectomy:** In some cases, the uterus and other reproductive organs might be removed.

### Chemotherapy

**Adjuvant chemotherapy:** Often used after surgery to eliminate any remaining cancer cells.

### Radiation therapy

**Less common:** Used selectively in certain cases.

## Advances in research and treatment

**PARP inhibitors:** Drugs targeting specific genetic mutations (like BRCA) have shown promising results in treatment.

## Early detection efforts

**Biomarker research:** Ongoing studies aim to identify specific biomarkers for early detection.

**Screening tests:** Improved screening methods are being researched to detect ovarian cancer at earlier stages.

## Coping and support

**Support groups:** Connecting with others facing similar challenges can be incredibly helpful.

**Counselling and therapy:** Professional guidance can assist in managing emotions and navigating the journey.

## Advocacy and awareness

**Raising awareness:** Organizations advocate for increased awareness, research funding, and support for patients and caregivers. Ovarian cancer presents significant challenges due to its late detection and vague symptoms. However, advancements in research, early detection efforts, and evolving treatment options provide hope for improved outcomes. Raising awareness, understanding risk factors, and advocating for regular check-ups are crucial steps in addressing this disease and supporting those affected.