



Our mission is to elevate awareness, accelerate diagnosis and educate women affected by ovarian cancer within Ireland. To source and share knowledge of developments in global research and best practice with the OvaCare community.

To provide support and advocacy through OvaCare's dedicated support networks. Our Vision is that all women concerned about or diagnosed with ovarian cancer have immediate access to the knowledge and support that is available, which empowers them to make critical personal and family decisions in a supportive environment.

Who are we

OvaCare was co-founded by June Feeney and Rachel McKeon in 2011, following their own personal experiences with ovarian cancer. They both felt there was very little support in Ireland for women and their families affected by the disease, and they believed strongly that OvaCare could help provide this support as well as 'giving a voice' to the disease. Our medical panel, led by Senior Scientist Dr Sharon O'Toole

from Trinity College consists of Gynaecological Oncologists from each of the 8 Centres of Excellence, Medical Oncologists, Pathologist, Medical Geneticist, Epidemiologist, Medical Social Worker, and Gynaecological Nurse Specialists. Our patron is Miriam O'Callaghan. OvaCare is a voluntary led organisation, our board members are listed below and further details on our website: [Ovacare Board](#)



Rachel McKeon
Co-Founder & Director



Sharon O'Toole, PhD
Chair of OvaCare &
Medical Panel



June Feeney
Co-Founder & Director



Margaret Cotter
Director, Treasurer



Michaela Burke
Director, Marketing



Francesca Kay
Director, Company
Secretary

What we do

Support - patient days and support groups

Annual Patient Days take place across Ireland which provide information and support for ovarian cancer patients and their families. It provides the opportunity to hear from leading clinicians, therapists and researchers specialising in the disease, as well as being a chance to meet fellow patients. The response to these days has been astounding; with many patients stating that they 'no longer feel alone'. We have established ovarian cancer support groups and run "coffee and chat" events each month across the country. From our events it is clear that women would appreciate the opportunity to meet with others going through similar experiences on a regular basis for support and encouragement.

Coffee & Chat – 2nd Saturday of Each Month



EDUCATE

Cancer Information

The aim of this section is to ensure that relevant and reliable information about ovarian cancer is available to the general public. The information is on the symptoms of ovarian cancer, risk factors, treatment, terminology and resources.



CONNECT

The OvaCare Community

Our online community is hosted via the HealthUnlocked platform. You can connect by joining OvaCare's community page on HealthUnlocked, where many of our members share useful tips and advice as well as offer each other moral support.



SHARE

Patient Days

We hold Annual Patient Days, which are open to Ovarian Cancer patients, their families and friends. These events are information days, which provide an opportunity to hear from leading clinicians, therapists and researchers plus a chance to meet with fellow patients.



SUPPORT

Why Your Support Matters

There are various and many ways you can support OvaCare's work. Whether it's by volunteering with us, helping spread awareness or by fundraising or donating. Without your support, we would be unable to do the work that we are doing!



OvaCare is a partner of INGO. The aim of the INGO is to raise awareness of gynaecological cancers across the Island of Ireland. The group are part of an international effort for 3 major awareness events: World Ovarian Cancer Day (WOCD) May 8th, Uterine Cancer Awareness Month and World Gynaecological Oncology (GO) Day Sept 20th.

In 2024, the Network continued the work with The Reputations Agency which was another great success.



The Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology comprises over 35 of Ireland's foremost gynaecological cancer campaigners, researchers and patient advocates.

OvaCare Campaigns

World Ovarian Cancer Day Campaign

The Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology (INGO) focussed their 2024 world ovarian cancer day campaign on increasing awareness of symptoms using the BEAT acronym.

This followed a repeat of their 2022 and 2023 surveys which still highlighted that 4 out of 5 women in Ireland were not confident to recognise the symptoms of ovarian cancer. INGO partnered with Brazilian street artist Brutto, who created an impressive mural on Grafton Street depicting BEAT messaging and educating passers-by on ovarian cancer symptoms.

INGO had the support of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association, Peter Mark and Press Up hospitality in highlighting BEAT symptoms among their networks. Sasha Terfous spoken word performance highlighting symptoms and reflecting the patient experience, commissioned by INGO in 2022, was promoted across digital channels.

Several notable landmarks and county councils across the country lit up in teal, World Ovarian Cancer Day's official colour, including Leinster House in Dublin, the Titanic Museum Belfast and City Hall in Cork.

A video of buildings around the country can be seen here; [World Ovarian Cancer Day](#).



[WOCD Video](#)

OvaCare Campaigns

World Ovarian Cancer Day Campaign

The **BEAT** symptoms can be vague but if persistent, women are encouraged to contact their GP.

- **B**loating that is persistent and doesn't come and go
- **E**ating less and feeling full more quickly
- **A**bdominal and pelvic pain you feel most days
- **T**oilet changes in urination or bowel habits

The campaign also sought to dispel the myth that cervical screening detects ovarian cancer. There is no screening for ovarian cancer. Ireland has one of the highest death rates from ovarian cancer in Europe. Early diagnosis can significantly improve survival. For more information and useful resources check out www.thisisGO.ie

A number of impactful patient and family members stories were featured in national newspapers, further reiterating the symptoms of ovarian cancer. Details of the World Ovarian Cancer Day Press Release can be found on the INGO page and a copy of the outputs achieved [INGO Outputs - ISGO](#).



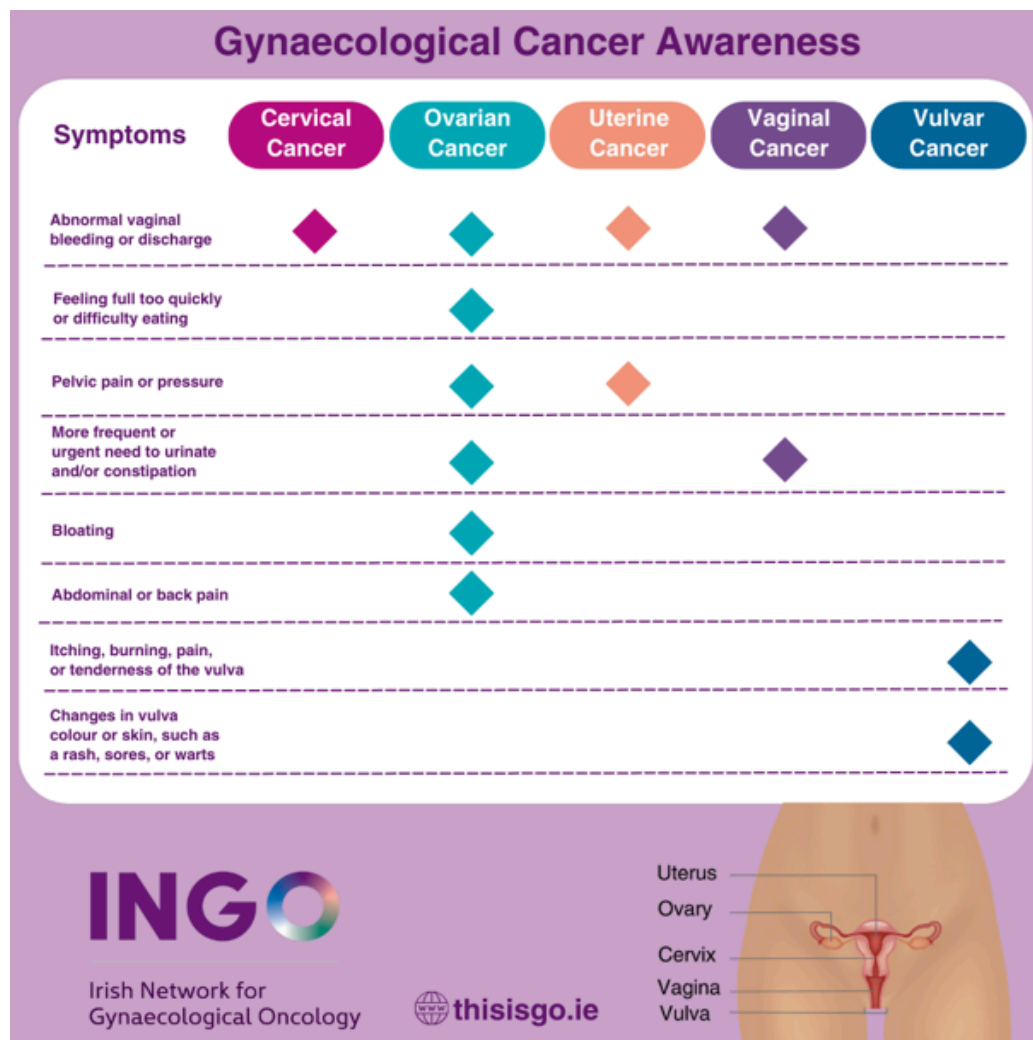
OvaCare World Go Day

Awareness Event: World Gynaecological Oncology Day 20th Sept 2024

On the 20th of September the Irish Network of Gynaecological Oncology (INGO) came together to raise awareness about all five gynaecological cancers (vulva, vaginal, cervical, uterine and ovarian) and their risk factors. World GO Day aims to educate people worldwide about the importance of sharing information in relation to prevention, screening, symptoms, early diagnosis and treatment.

This year the campaign centred around ending the stigma around gynaecological cancers and educating on the female anatomy.

Research commissioned by the Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology (INGO), showed that one in three women in Ireland (34%) mistakenly believe that cervical screening checks for all five gynaecological cancers. The CervicalCheck Screening Programme assesses whether a woman is at risk of having cervical cancer, there is no screening for the other gynaecological cancers.



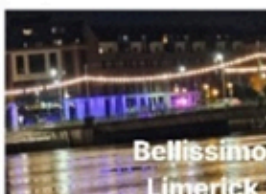
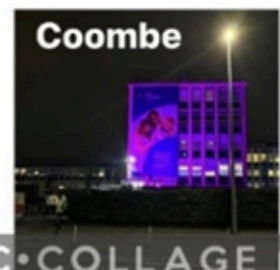
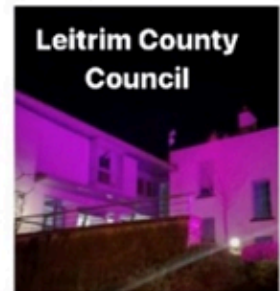
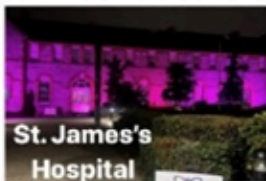
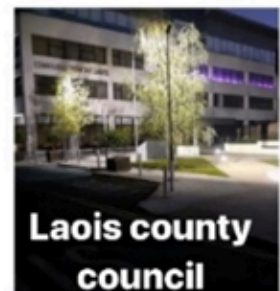
The graphic highlights the common symptoms of gynaecological cancers, but there are more symptoms that relate specifically to each type.

If you have persistent symptoms for longer than two weeks, then you should talk to your GP.

OvaCare World Go Day

Light Up in Purple

To mark World GO Day 20 buildings across Ireland lit up in purple, the international campaign colour including; Ballinasloe Monument, Cavan Courthouse, City Hall Cork, Coombe Hospital, Convention Centre Dublin, Daly's Shakey Bridge Cork, East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre, Laois County Council, Le Peor Trench, Leinster House, Leitrim County Council, Limerick City & County Council Corporate Headquarters, Mansion House Dublin, Rock of Cashel, Sligo City Hall, St. James's Hospital, Titanic Belfast, Trinity College Dublin, UCD Water Tower, Wexford County Council. A selection of images are shown below.



OvaCare World Go Day

Free Webinar

A free webinar took place on World GO Day which highlighted the five gynaecological cancers, symptoms and risk factors, with insights from cancer patients and medical professionals. The recording is available on the homepage of www.thisisgo.ie

Press Release

A number of patient and family members stories were featured in national and local media. Details of the World GO Day Press Release and a copy of the outputs achieved can be found at INGO webpage.

Dip or Dance

Throughout September, people were invited to take part in a Dip or Dance with HSE National Cancer Control Programme sponsored hats, to remind women that maintaining a healthy weight and staying active can reduce the risk of developing Uterine Cancer.

Gynaecological Cancer Awareness

Symptoms	Cervical Cancer	Ovarian Cancer	Uterine Cancer	Endometrial Cancer
Abnormal vaginal bleeding	Yes	No	No	Yes
Abnormal vaginal discharge	Yes	No	No	Yes
Heavy or irregular periods	No	No	Yes	Yes
Menstrual pain	No	No	Yes	Yes
Weight gain	No	Yes	No	No
Bloating	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in bowel habits	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in bladder habits	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in appetite	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in energy levels	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in skin	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in hair	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in nails	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in voice	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in facial features	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in body shape	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in breast shape	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in breast size	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in breast color	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in breast texture	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in breast shape	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in breast size	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in breast color	No	Yes	No	No
Changes in breast texture	No	Yes	No	No

World GO Day
Audience >4M

FREE WEBINAR: GYNAECOLOGICAL CANCERS: RISK FACTORS, SYMPTOMS & PREVENTION.
Dr Claire Thompson, Prof Niall Russell and patient panel
20TH SEPT 1PM-2PM (GMT)
Register on www.thisisgo.ie

INGO and **nccp**

Lauren Mahon
After being diagnosed with gynaecological cancer in her forties, Lauren Mahon is on a mission to help educate other women.
A mum-of-four and former special needs teaching assistant was 'very sad' when she received her diagnosis but she wants to reassure others.

OvaCare Awards

Irish Healthcare Award

Sharon O'Toole was delighted to accept, on behalf of INGO, the Patient Organisation Project of the Year at the Irish Healthcare Awards 2024 for the Ovarian Cancer Awareness Campaign.



National and International Meetings

ESGO ENGAGe patient advocacy meeting Barcelona Mar 8-9th 2024

OvaCare is a member of the Engage network which is part of the European Society of Gynaecological Oncology (ESGO) and had an opportunity to highlight their work at the annual meeting in Barcelona. Sharon O'Toole attended this in-person meeting on behalf of OvaCare. Details of the programme are available [here](#).

ENGAGe  **12th Patient Advocacy Seminar**
ESGO | European Network of Gynaecological Cancer Advocacy Groups
March 8 - 9, 2024, Barcelona, Spain



Meetings

IGCS Annual Meeting 2024

The International Gynecologic Cancer Society (IGCS) held its annual global meeting at the Convention Centre Dublin on 16th to 18th Oct 2024. This is the first time Ireland has hosted a global meeting in gynaecological oncology, bringing leading experts together from across disciplines. The lived experience of a cancer diagnosis was central at all plenary sessions of the meeting.



Bridget Carr (Ireland)
Ovarian Cancer Survivor



Meetings

A dedicated Survivor-Caregiver Advocacy Summit was held on Oct 15th, prior to IGCS Meeting. This was co-chaired by OvaCare member Bridget Carr.

Bridget said *"When I was invited to participate in the IGCS conference, I felt both nervous and excited, and I considered it a privilege to be part of such an amazing international event."*



"On Tuesday, October 15th, I was honoured to represent Irish patients and co-chair the IGCAN Survivor-Caregiver Summit alongside incredible individuals from Finland, Scotland, and India.

We welcomed survivors and caregivers worldwide, and we were thrilled to see strong attendance from our Irish community. The various speakers provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by other countries, making many of us realize how fortunate we are in Ireland to have relatively easier access to cancer treatments.

For the first time at the Advocacy Summit, attendees had the opportunity to browse posters on various topics, including advocacy research, patient and community outreach and support, public awareness campaigns, patient education, and palliative/supportive care and complementary therapies.

At the main IGCS conference, five Irish patients were given the chance to share their stories about their gynaecological cancer journeys. This was the first time patients were involved in this conference, thanks to the dedication of our wonderful Irish health professionals who recognize the importance of patient involvement and how we can contribute to research.

I had the privilege of sharing my own story about my journey with ovarian cancer. I focused on two key topics: delayed diagnosis and the fear of recurrence. Like the other patients who bravely volunteered to share their experiences.

I believe that by humanizing the cancer journey and discussing the challenges we face, we can inspire health professionals to continue engaging in research aimed at achieving better outcomes for patients. Overall, the experience was incredibly enjoyable and provided me with the opportunity to meet a diverse group of people, for which I will be forever thankful."

OvaCare Meetings

It was great to have a strong presence from OvaCare members at the meeting. OvaCare had the opportunity of presenting a poster at this meeting, displayed at the main IGCS meeting also.



ESTABLISHMENT OF OVACARE: AN OVARIAN CANCER SUPPORT CHARITY IN IRELAND

June Feeney, Rachel McKeon, Margaret Cotter, Francesca Kay, Ruth Hayes, Brid O'Connor, Michael Feeney, Sharon O'Toole.

OvaCare

Introduction

OvaCare was established in 2011 by June Feeney and Rachel McKeon.

Aim: To give a voice to and provide support for all those affected by Ovarian Cancer in Ireland.

Mission: To improve diagnosis and education of ovarian cancer in Ireland, through sharing global research and best practice, and providing support and advocacy through our dedicated support network.



 Rachel McKeon
Co-Founder & Executive Director

 June Feeney
Co-Founder & Executive Director

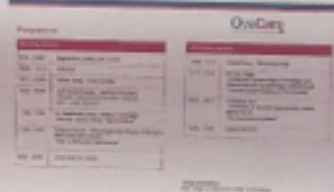
 Margaret Cotter
Patient Support Officer

 Francesca Kay
Charity Communications Officer

 Sharon O'Toole
Marketing & Fundraising Officer

Results

The annual patient day attracts members from around the country and has been a real success. For many, the coffee and chats are the first time they have met another ovarian cancer patient. Patient days rotate around the country annually and now combines with the Irish Society of Gynaecological Oncology Annual Meeting.

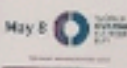



Monthly coffee and chats take place on a hybrid format to enable patients to link with fellow patients. OvaCare has invested in the www.thisisDOL.ie platform to enable patients to access personalised information. Other patient supports have included donation of iPads to cancer wards.





OvaCare, together with its members, have advocated for national guidelines, improved services for patients and access to treatments. OvaCare is an active participant of global initiatives such as ESGO INGAIR, World Ovarian Cancer Coalition and International Society for Gynaecological Cancer Advocacy Network and participates in their awareness campaigns as a member of the Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology.














Methods

OvaCare has taken a number of approaches to support ovarian cancer patients including: annual patient days with expert speakers, monthly coffee and chats online and in person, blogs, advocacy and awareness.

 **SUPPORT**
PATIENT DAYS AND SUPPORT GROUPS

 **INFORMATION**

 **ONLINE COMMUNITY**

 **ADVOCACY**

Fundraising, Donations and Sponsorship support the work of OvaCare.




Conclusions

OvaCare has provided a much-needed voice for ovarian cancer in Ireland. This voice has been further amplified by working with INGO and has demonstrated the power of collaboration. Being a member of the global organisations has enabled OvaCare to benefit from many shared tools and resources which ultimately have impacted on the lives of women with ovarian cancer.

OvaCare Events

Coffee and Chat Events 2024

Coffee and Chats continued virtually and in person in 2024 as detailed below.

You can register for the coffee and chats on our website at [Event Registration - Ovacare - Ovarian Cancer Community](#)

Coffee & Chats 11am - 1pm

January 13th - Online

February 10th - Cork

March 9th - Online

April 13th - Limerick

May 11th - Donegal

June 8th - Dublin

July 13th - Online

August 10th - Online

September 21st - Sligo

October 12th - Online

November 23rd - Athlone | Patient Day

December 14th - Online



OvaCare Research

Research

After listening to our members' requests for OvaCare to invest in research, we have been actively exploring suitable projects. In 2024, we were thrilled to partner with Breakthrough Cancer Research for the Innovation Awards, and we look forward to sharing updates on its progress with you.



Breakthrough Cancer Research Innovation Grant Programme 2024

In partnership with Citi Ireland, Ovacare, and Royal London Ireland

The Breakthrough Cancer Research Innovation Grant Programme 2024, in partnership with Citi Ireland, OvaCare, and Royal London Ireland, is now accepting applications. This initiative represents a collaboration aimed at funding world-class cancer research in Ireland.

Funding Details

- **Maximum Grant Value:** €50,000
- **Project Duration:** 12-18 months
- **Eligible Institutions:** Any University in the Republic of Ireland currently engaged in cancer research

Research

Faye Lewis is registered for a PhD in Trinity College Dublin and working in The Club Consortium investigating the liquid biopsy in ovarian cancer.

She volunteers with OvaCare and has presented her work to OvaCare members and gotten feedback on her project. She has also facilitated a number of laboratory visits from OvaCare members throughout the year.



Club Consortium [Club Cancer Research](#)

OvaCare Activities

Fundraising

A number of fundraising events were held by members and their families throughout the year and we are extremely grateful for the important funds raised. Events ranged from marathons to jumping from planes.

2024 Patient Day

OvaCare held its annual patient day in Glasston Lakehouse in Athlone which was also open to patients and their families to attend. Videos of the talks are available [here](#)



OVARIAN CANCER PATIENT DAY & WELLNESS EVENT

Saturday 23rd November, 2024
Glasston Lake House, Athlone.

From 11am - 3.30pm
Registration at 10.30am
OvaCare AGM at 9.30am

An information day for Ovarian Cancer Patients, Survivors and their friends and families. An opportunity to hear from a leading clinician and therapist.
 Enjoy some pampering from the Look Good Feel Better team.
 A chance to meet fellow patients.

Free of charge • Lunch will be provided
Patients are welcome to bring a guest

Register for the event online at www.ovacare.ie

Travel Bursary
 To enable this meeting to be accessible to those outside Athlone, Ovacare are in a position to contribute to the funding of travel expenses for individual members on request.
 For more information please email info@ovacare.ie

www.ovacare.ie

Acknowledgment of support:



OvaCare Activities

Congratulations to Christine Campbell

"Being a member of ISGO PPI & OvaCare has given me the opportunity to make a difference in the fight against ovarian cancer with like minded people.

2024 has been a busy but worthwhile year as I have participated & collaborated in so many projects & events which have given me a sense of purpose.

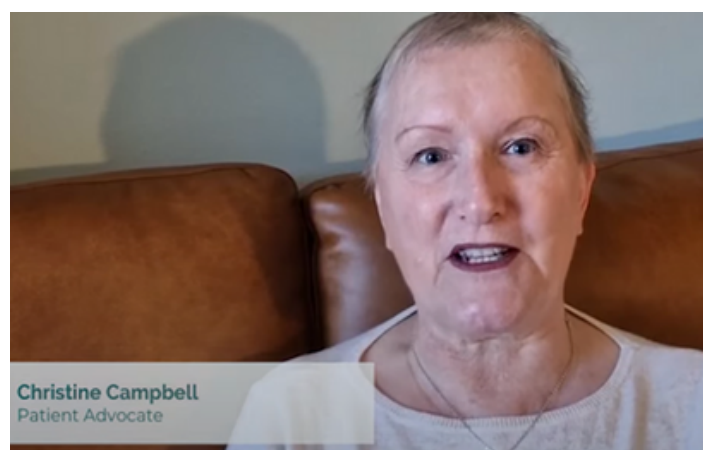
A taster of my year, but not exhaustive - Co-producing research patient information leaflet, Website design, recording information videos for World OC Day & Thisisgo.ie, Speaking engagements at OvaCare's AGM & CLUB Symposium, attended IGCS Annual Global Meeting, Patient Day Interviews for press, local and regional news, local radio to raise awareness in NI. I have met with the First Minister & Deputy First Minister, local MLAs to advocate for an OC Public Awareness Campaign.

With the support of ISGO PPI & OvaCare I can't wait to see what opportunities 2025 will provide.



I was honoured in 2024 to be nominated and win the World Ovarian Cancer Coalitions Impact Award.

This was awarded in recognition of my advocacy to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer across Ireland.



As an Ovarian Cancer Patient, with a terminal diagnosis, I am grateful for the support of Ovacare, Thisisgo & ISGO PPI in supporting me to give a voice to others affected by this disease & collaborate to ensure #no person is left behind."

OvaCare Activities

Facebook Support Group

OvaCare members Bridget Carr, Deirdre O'Raw and Serena Whelan have a PRIVATE support group on [Facebook](#), providing a safe, secure platform for those affected by ovarian cancer. You can chat with people on a similar journey, share thoughts, ask questions, share concerns, stories and more. Remember you are not alone. We are stronger together.

Dates for Diaries 2025

- Mar 22nd Lynch Syndrome Ireland Information Day
- May 8th World Ovarian Cancer Day
- May 9th Marie Keating BRCA Day
- Sept 20th World Gynaecological Oncology Day
- Dec 5th ISGO Annual Meeting with dedicated PPI session Cork
- Dec 6th OvaCare Patient Day Cork

Virtual coffee and chats will continue on the second Saturday of every month, 11am-1pm with some in person events planned. our In-person coffee and chats will be confirmed in advance so ensure you are on our mailing list.

Please register by emailing info@ovacare.ie or on our [OvaCare Website](#)

Coffee & Chats 11am - 1pm

January 11th - Online
February 15th - Cork
March 8th - Online
April 12th - Dublin
May 10th - Online
June 14th - Galway
July 12th - Dublin
August 09th - Online
September 13th - Belfast
October 11th - Enniskillen
November 8th - Limerick
December 13th - Online



Support and Remembrance

Thank you to our Supporters

OvaCare are very grateful for the support we receive from donations and fundraising throughout the year. This allows us to continue the important work of supporting you. As we are a voluntary organization, we are grateful to all the volunteers who assist throughout the year. In 2024 OvaCare was part of the INGO awareness campaigns and are grateful for the funding OvaCare received towards this from AstraZeneca, GSK and Abtran. OvaCare are very grateful for the support from the AstraZeneca and the Press Up group who supported our coffee and chats this year.



Remembering Past Members

We are conscious within our membership group that we will have ladies who will die of their disease. We have lost some fantastic and amazing ladies, many of whom were great patient advocates and devoted their time to increasing awareness of the disease.

On behalf of OvaCare we would like to thank them for their contribution and for trying to make a difference for women with ovarian cancer.

We hope their contribution will inspire others. We offer our sincere condolences to their families.