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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 We Are

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](#).



Rachel McKeon
Co-Founder & Director



June Feeney
Co-Founder & Director



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



Michaela Burke
Director



Francesca Kay
Director, Company Secretary



Margaret Cotter
Director, Treasurer



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.



ONLINE COMMUNITY

Our online community forms part of our website and is a place where patients and family members share their experiences, fears, hopes and concerns via online blogs, questions and polls. The community is proving a valuable resource for those directly affected by a disease which sees over 400 new diagnoses each year in Ireland.



INFORMATION

Our website www.ovacare.ie provides vital factsheets on ovarian cancer, links for the latest news, links for Cancer Trials Ireland for clinical trial updates and progress in research as well as information on upcoming events. The information was put together thanks to a joint grant from ENGAGe (European Network of Gynaecological Cancer Advocacy Groups) to OvaCare and another Irish ovarian cancer charity SOCK (Supporting Ovarian Cancer Knowledge). OvaCare also supported the thisisGO.ie ovarian cancer platform which is a personalised platform for ovarian cancer patients and their families.



ADVOCACY

OvaCare is a member of ENGAGe which is a subgroup of ESGO (European Society of Gynaecological Oncology). We are also members of IPPOSI (Irish Platform of Patient Organisations, Science and Industry). Our own members of OvaCare, who are primarily patients and family members, continually express concern that their cause is little known in Ireland and therefore little understood or provided for. In addressing the former issue of being little known, OvaCare was actively involved in establishing the first ever World Ovarian Cancer Day in 2013 and is part of the International working group on this on an annual basis.



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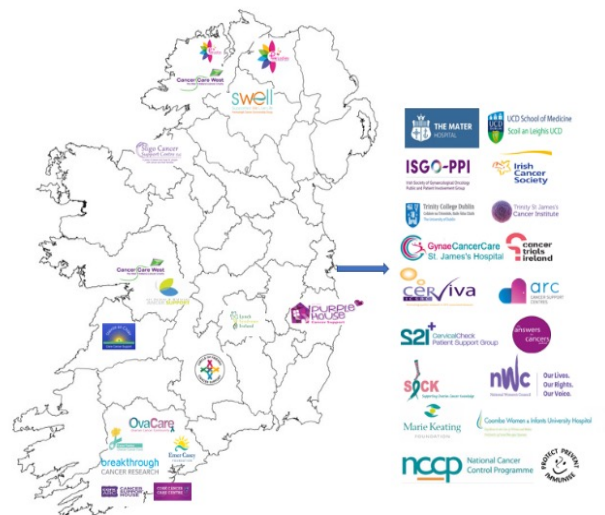
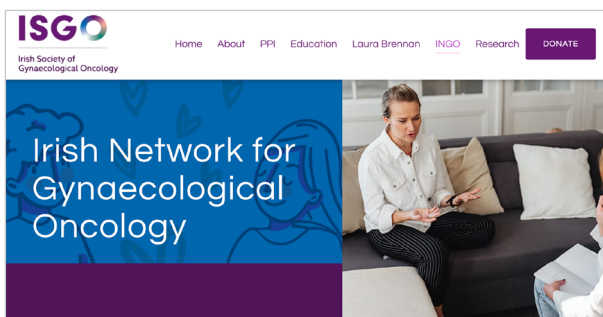
World Ovarian Cancer Day 08.05.2025

Ireland has an active gynaecological cancer support, advocate, research and care community. In recent years this has formalised and expanded into the [Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology \(INGO\)](#). 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 in June, and World Gynaecological Oncology (GO) Day Sept 20th.

The INGO currently includes: ARC Cancer Support Centres, Dublin; Answers for Cancer podcast team; BRCA Ireland; Breakthrough Cancer Research; Cancer Care West; Cancer Trials Ireland; CervicalCheck; CERVIVA; Circle of Friends Cancer Support Centre; Cork ARC Cancer Support; Cork Cancer Care Centre; East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre; Emer Casey Foundation; Hive Cancer Support, Derry; Irish Cancer Society; Irish Society of Gynaecological Oncology; Karen Fenton Ovarian Cancer Fund; Lynch Syndrome Ireland; Marie Keating Foundation; Mater Hospital Dublin; National Cancer Control Programme; National Immunisation Office; National Women's Council of Ireland; OvaCare; Purple House Cancer Support; Queens, Belfast; Sláinte an Chláir; Sligo Cancer Support; SOCK; St. James's Hospital Foundation (GynaeCancerCare); Swell Fermanagh Cancer Survivorship Group; The Coombe Hospital, Dublin; Trinity College Dublin, Trinity St James's Cancer Institute; University College Cork; University College Dublin School of Medicine; University College Dublin Gynaecological Oncology Group and 221+ CervicalCheck Patient Support Group.

INGO

Irish Network for
Gynaecological Oncology



World Ovarian Cancer Day Campaign

The Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology (INGO) focussed their 2025 world ovarian cancer day campaign on increasing awareness of symptoms using the BEAT acronym. [Sasha Terfous' spoken word performance](#), highlighting symptoms and reflecting the patient experience, commissioned by INGO in 2022, was promoted across digital channels.

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



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 number of articles were featured including; Dr Claire Thompson in RSVP magazine and RSVP live [Oncologist explains the subtle signs of 'silent killer' ovarian cancer | RSVP Live](#). Deirdre Flannelly one of our patient advocates featured in the Irish Country Magazine where she told her story of the resilience and love their home represents as well as raising awareness for ovarian cancer. Her husband Pat built their dream home while she underwent treatment for stage four Ovarian Cancer. [Inside the issue: take a look into our May|June edition - Irish Country Magazine](#).

An open lab evening took place in the Trinity Centre in St James's Hospital organised in conjunction with Breakthrough Cancer Research.

Raising awareness of Gynaecological Cancers

On the 20th of September the Irish Network of Gynaecological Oncology (INGO) which include thirty of Ireland's foremost gynaecological cancer campaigners, researchers and patient advocates came together to raise awareness about all five gynaecological cancers (cervical, ovarian, uterine, vulvar, and vaginal) 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.

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.

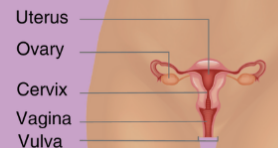
Gynaecological Cancer Awareness

Symptoms	Cervical Cancer	Ovarian Cancer	Uterine Cancer	Vaginal Cancer	Vulvar Cancer
Abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Feeling full too quickly or difficulty eating		◆			
Pelvic pain or pressure		◆	◆		
More frequent or urgent need to urinate and/or constipation		◆		◆	
Bloating		◆			
Abdominal or back pain		◆			
Itching, burning, pain, or tenderness of the vulva					◆
Changes in vulva colour or skin, such as a rash, sores, or warts					◆



Irish Network for
Gynaecological Oncology

www.thisisgo.ie



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

A number of patient 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 on the OvaCare [webpage](#).

VIEW OUTPUTS



One in three mistakenly believe cervical screening checks for all gynaecological cancers

2,000 Women Diagnosed Annually Across Ireland

Dip or Dance

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



The annual Dip or Dance campaign was launched by Suzanne Bermingham and 4 generations of her family, outlining the impact the gynaecological cancers can have on family members as some have a genetic link.

As always Miriam O Callaghan lent her support at the 40ft for the Dip organised by Marie Keating Foundation and supported by Councillor Martha Fanning.

Over 15 swims took place around the island of Ireland.

Minister Mary Butler supported the campaign.



Seminar

Deputy Ivana Bacik opened an awareness event seminar at the Breakthrough Cancer Research Cancer Revolution Exhibition in the Stephens Green shopping centre given by Dr Claire Thompson from the Mater Hospital.



Light Up in Purple

To mark World GO Day, 26 buildings across Ireland were lit Áras Mac Dhiarmada, Casino Marino, Collins Barracks, Cork City Hall, Dept. of Education (Marlborough St.), Dublin Castle Bedford Tower, Dublin Castle Chapel Royal, Dublin City Hall, East Galway & Midlands Cancer Support, Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Kildare St.), Farmleigh (Water Tower), Four Courts, Kilkenny Castle, Leinster House, Le Poer Trench, Mansion House, National Concert Hall, National Library, National Museum, Pearse Lyons Distillery (Dublin), Phoenix Park Roundabout, Rock of Cashel, St. James's Hospital, St. Stephen's Green – Wolfe Tone Monument, The Coombe Hospital, Titanic Belfast.



National and International Meetings



ESGO ENGAGE PATIENT ADVOCACY MEETING ROME FEB 20TH - 23RD 2025

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 the work of OvaCare at the annual meeting in Rome. Bridget Carr attended this in-person meeting as an OvaCare representative.

Details of the programme are available [here](#).

We were invited to speak and have information desks at a number of events, including:

Ovacome Health and Wellbeing Day | Belfast

Gathering Around Cancer | Croke Park

Christine Campbell represented OvaCare at the Living with and Beyond Gynae Cancer event in Northern Ireland.



NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

Coffee and Chat Events | 2025

Coffee and Chats continued in-person and hybrid throughout 2025 as detailed below. You can register for the coffee and chats on our website.

EVENT REGISTRATION

- Jan 11th Sat 11am-1pm online
- Feb 15th Sat 11am-1pm Cork
- Mar 8th Sat 11am-1pm online
- April 12th Sat 11am-1pm Dublin
- May 10th Sat 11am-1pm online
- June 14th Sat 11am-1pm Galway
- July 12th Sat 11am-1pm Dublin
- Aug 9th Sat 11am-1pm online
- Sept 13th Sat 11am-1pm Belfast
- Oct 11th Sat 11am-1pm Enniskillen
- Nov 8th Sat 11am-1pm Limerick
- Dec 13th Sat 11am-1pm online



OvaCare were delighted to partner with Breakthrough Cancer Research in the Innovations Award.


Kellie Dean from UCC was the recipient of this award and gave an update on the project at our annual patient day.

IT'S IN THE BLOOD! CATCHING OVARIAN CANCER EARLY WITH LONG, NON-CODING RNAS

Our study aims to test a group of long, non-coding RNAs (lncRNAs) found in blood platelets. Platelets are small blood cells that can take up molecules from cancer cells, and we believe that they can carry unique RNA molecules from tumours. In preliminary research, our lab identified lncRNAs that are higher in the blood of ovarian cancer patients compared to healthy individuals, and these lncRNAs were also elevated in patients with early-stage ovarian cancer.

Since presenting at the OvaCare Patient Day in December 2025, we have moved forward with our clinical research ethics approval to collect blood samples from ovarian cancer patients, those with high family risk, and healthy individuals. We will analyse these samples to measure the levels of identified lncRNAs and find new ones. We will also measure proteins found in blood plasma. Overall, we aim to determine which molecules can be detected in blood samples to indicate the presence of ovarian cancer. We are extremely grateful to OvaCare for supporting our research – so thank you!

RESEARCH BURSARY



Breakthrough Cancer Research Innovation Grant Programme 2024


in partnership with CRI Ireland, OvaCare, and Royal London Ireland

The Breakthrough Cancer Research Innovation Grant Programme 2024, in partnership with CRI 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

IT'S IN THE BLOOD! - CATCHING OVARIAN CANCER EARLY WITH LONG, NON-CODING RNAS



Dr. Kellie Dean

Kellie Dean, lecturer and principal investigator in the School of Biochemistry and Cell Biology at University College Cork, was awarded with a Breakthrough Cancer Research Innovation Grant 2024 in partnership with OvaCare.

CLuB CONSORTIUM

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 has presented her work to OvaCare members and gotten feedback on her project.



[VISIT CLuB CANCER RESEARCH](#)

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Fundraising Events | 2025

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.



OvaCare held its annual patient day in conjunction with the Irish Society of Gynaecological Oncology annual scientific meeting in River Lee Hotel, Cork on December 6th.

WATCH RECORDINGS



OVARIAN CANCER PATIENT DAY

Saturday 6th December, 2025
The River Lee Hotel, Cork

From 10am - 3pm
 Registration at 9.30am

An information day for Ovarian Cancer Patients, Survivors and their friends and families. An opportunity to hear from leading clinicians, therapists and researchers.
 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 Cork, 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



Patient Day 6th December 2025

The River Lee Hotel, Cork

Programme of Events		
Time	Event	Facilitator
09.30 - 10.00	Registration, Refreshments, Visit Stands	
10.00 - 10.10	Welcome	Margaret Cotter.
10.10 - 11.10	"Resilience and Me, The Ovarian Cancer Experience" Shared stories with audience participation.	Yvonne O'Meara.
11.10 - 11.50	Menopause and Cancer	Brenda Moran.
11.50 - 12.30	Ovarian Cancer Treatments	Fionán Donohue.
12.30 - 1.30	Lunch, Visit Stands	
1.30 - 1.40	Breakthrough Cancer Research	Frances Drummond.
1.40 - 2.10	Innovation Bursary Award, "It's in the blood: discovering RNA and protein markers for ovarian cancer". Q&A	Kellie Dean.
2.10 - 2.50	Menopause, Diet and Cancer, Q&A	Katie Johnston.
2.50 - 3.00	Close of event	Margaret Cotter.

AstraZeneca Ireland convened key stakeholders to collaboratively address the inequities in access to cancer medicines. A roundtable held in September 2024 identified the need for an early access pilot programme for innovative oncology medicines to bridge existing access gaps. Following this, a workshop in May 2025 focused on developing the structure of this early access pilot programme, including setting clinical criteria for treatments. This culminated in an AV room briefing in Leinster House.



Laura Brennan Award 2025

The Irish Society of Gynaecological Oncology (ISGO) presented the Laura Brennan Award 2025 to Christine Campbell at the annual Irish Society of Gynaecological Oncology Meeting in Cork on Dec 5th, 2025. Laura's parents, Bernie and Larry Brennan, were in attendance for the presentation. Laura Brennan received the inaugural award in Belfast in 2018 for her endless campaign for the HPV vaccine. With Laura, it was decided that the Laura Brennan Award would be presented on an annual basis by the ISGO to a patient or member of the public as a recognition of outstanding achievement in the areas of gynaecological oncology patient advocacy and/or patient and public involvement in research.

Christine Campbell from Belfast, is a mum of 2 who was diagnosed in 2021 with Stage 4B high grade serous ovarian cancer, aged 55. Christine's interest are ovarian cancer, cancer research and palliative and end-of-life care. Since her diagnosis and subsequent retirement, she has been leading with Target Ovarian Cancer on the need for a public awareness campaign on signs and symptoms of this disease in Northern Ireland. Most recently, due to patient advocacy, she has secured a change in cervical screening literature with the Public Health Agency. This change highlights that cervical screening does not detect ovarian or other gynae cancers.

Christine received a terminal diagnosis in July 23 and continues to support and advocate as an active member with multiple charities, grassroot groups and is involved in research across the Island of Ireland and the UK.





Private 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.

FACEBOOK PAGE

Dacey Scroggins Distinguished Advocacy and ISGO Advocacy Award

The Irish Society of Gynaecological Oncology Public and Patient Involvement Group founded by Sharon O'Toole and Yvonne O'Meara received the Dacey Scroggins Distinguished Advocacy Award for the advocacy work done in Ireland. In addition, the ISGO recognised their contribution with a special award in 2025.





Coffee and Chats

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

EVENT REGISTRATION

January	10 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Online
February	14 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Sligo
March	14 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Online Guest Speaker
April	11 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Limerick
May	9 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Online
June	13 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Dublin
July	11 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Cork
August	8 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Online
September	12 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Belfast
October	10 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Dublin
November	14 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Online
December	12 th Saturday 11am - 1pm Online

Dates for Diary

March	22 nd Sunday Lynch Syndrome Ireland Information Day
May	8 th Friday World Ovarian Cancer Day
May	15 th Saturday Marie Keating BRCA Day
September	20 th Sunday World Gynaecological Oncology Day
December	4 th Friday ISGO Annual Meeting with dedicated PPI session Galway Bay Hotel
December	5 th Saturday OvaCare Patient Day Galway Bay Hotel

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 2025, OvaCare was part of the INGO awareness campaigns and are grateful for the funding OvaCare received towards this from AstraZeneca, GSK, and Abbvie.

OvaCare are very grateful for the support from AstraZeneca and the Press Up group who supported our coffee and chats this year.

OvaCare are grateful to MSD for the support of our patient day.





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.