

Karl C. Podratz, MD, PhD



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Each year over 28,000 women lose their lives to a gynecologic cancer. These 28,000 women leave behind loving family and friends — husbands, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, significant others, neighbors. All who are left behind are important, but there is a special loss when it is your mother.

The Gynecologic Cancer Foundation (GCF) today announces a new initiative that addresses the needs of 'generational survivors' — the sons and daughters who had to say good-bye to a mother. Most deaths from gynecologic cancers occur in women diagnosed with ovarian cancer and since most of these women are older, often their sons and daughters are young adults. We are especially interested in reaching these young adults because many want to take action to help other women facing an ovarian cancer diagnosis. We also invite and encourage other family members and friends to join this effort.

GCF is asking generational survivors and others to help us spread the word that there are symptoms of ovarian cancer. That women need to listen to their bodies and press health care professionals to consider ovarian cancer when they experience the symptoms that research has proven to be associated with ovarian cancer. We need to dispel the myth that ovarian cancer is a 'silent killer,' that it 'whispers.' In fact, it announces itself loud and clear according to this new research. Or ask any of the over 21,000 women who were diagnosed with ovarian cancer last year alone. Many will tell you the familiar story of experiencing these symptoms but not being taken seriously, or of having been sent to a variety of physicians before the diagnosis was made, often when the disease had advanced.

GCF also asks that you inform women who suspect or have been diagnosed with a gynecologic cancer to seek care first from gynecologic oncologist. This is especially true for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer and endometrial cancer, the most common gynecologic cancer. [For more information, see the article on page 2, "2008 State of the State of Gynecologic Cancers Confirms Value of Seeking Care from a Gynecologic Oncologist."]

Please join GCF is establishing a community of generational survivors by writing to us at info@thegcf.org. Soon there will be a place for this new community on GCF's Web site, the Women's Cancer Network (www.wcn.org).

Sincerely,

Karl C. Podratz, MD, PhD
Chairman


Know the Symptoms of Ovarian Cancer

HISTORICALLY OVARIAN CANCER WAS CALLED THE "SILENT KILLER" because symptoms were not thought to develop until the chance of cure was poor. However, recent studies have shown this term is untrue and that the following symptoms are much more likely to occur in women with ovarian cancer than women in the general population. These symptoms include:

- ▶ Bloating
- ▶ Pelvic or abdominal pain
- ▶ Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
- ▶ Urinary symptoms (urgency or frequency)

Women with ovarian cancer report that symptoms are persistent and represent a change from normal for their bodies. The frequency and/or number of such symptoms are key factors in the diagnosis of ovarian cancer. Several studies show that even early stage ovarian cancer can produce these symptoms.

Women who have these symptoms almost daily for more than a few weeks should see their doctor, preferably a gynecologist.



For more information please visit www.wcn.org

2008 STATE OF THE STATE OF GYNECOLOGIC CANCERS: SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT TO THE WOMEN OF AMERICA



Report Confirms Value of Seeking Care from a Gynecologic Oncologist

For the first time, accumulated data demonstrates that women diagnosed with a reproductive cancer, especially ovarian and uterine (endometrial) cancers, experience improved outcomes when treated first by a gynecologic oncologist. The *2008 State of the State of Gynecologic Cancers: Sixth Annual Report to the Women of America*, published by the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation (GCF), details these results.

Gynecologic oncologists are physicians committed to the comprehensive treatment of women with cancer. After completing four years of medical school and four years of residency in obstetrics and gynecology, these physicians pursue an additional three to four years of training in gynecologic oncology through a rigorous fellowship program overseen by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Gynecologic oncologists are not only trained to be skilled surgeons capable of performing wide-ranging cancer operations, but also are trained in prescribing the appropriate chemotherapy for those conditions and/or radiation therapy when indicated. Frequently, gynecologic oncologists are involved in research studies and clinical trials that are aimed at finding more effective and less toxic treatments to further advance the field and improve cure rates.

“While only approximately 1/3 of women with ovarian cancer receive their initial surgery for ovarian cancer from a gynecologic oncologist, those who do are more likely to experience the appropriate and recommended surgery,” said Dr. Carol Brown, Medical Editor of the report and Associate Attending Surgeon, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. “Moreover, gynecologic oncologists are more likely to perform radical procedures during surgery resulting in a lower volume of residual disease. Data shows that patients operated on by surgeons more likely to use radical surgical procedures doubled their median survival time,” she continued.

Endometrial cancer patients also have better outcomes when their initial surgery is performed by a gynecologic oncologist. This is true for two primary reasons: First, gynecologic oncologists are more likely to perform complete surgical staging that includes removal of lymph nodes from the pelvis and aortic regions. Second, when treating women with Stage I endometrial cancer based on comprehensive surgical staging, gynecologic oncologists are less likely to recommend follow-up radiation therapy. This reduces the cost of care by 31 percent, prevents complications from over-treatment and offers patients a better quality of life.

Similar benefits are experienced by patients diagnosed with other gynecologic cancers, primarily due to the extensive surgical skills of gynecologic oncologists. ■

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists Distributes Report

For the second year, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) has distributed GCF’s State of the State of Gynecologic Cancers report to its approximately 37,000 practicing Fellows, Junior Fellows in Practice and Junior Fellows in Residency. In a cover letter mailed with the report signed by Dr. Karl Podratz, GCF Chairman, Dr. Thomas Burke, SGO President and Dr. Douglas Kirkpatrick, ACOG President, Dr. Kirkpatrick wrote:

“The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recognizes that generalist obstetrician-gynecologists provide the majority of cancer screening and long-term follow-up care for their patients. This GCF/SGO report points out how collaboration with a gynecologic oncologist, where available, for cancer treatment and continuing care may provide additional benefit.”

GCF looks forward to future collaborative efforts SGO, ACOG and others as it seeks to educate women about the prevention, early detection and treatment of gynecologic cancers. ■

GCAM Hat’s Off

To Dr. Tri A. Dihn, a gynecologic oncologist at The Methodist Hospital in Houston, and his patient, Mary Lou Fernandez for their outreach to the media during September, Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month.

Frosted Pink with a Twist Aired on ABC, Sunday, October 12 on ESPN-ABC



For the second year, GCF participated with the National Breast Cancer Coalition, the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship and the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance in a multi-year television and multimedia campaign that focuses on educating viewers about cancers that primarily affect women. Co-hosted this year by Olympic Gymnastics Champion Shannon Miller, and cancer survivor and Olympic Figure Skating Champion Scott Hamilton, the show highlighted current Olympic champions Shawn Johnson, Nastia Liukin, Paul Hamm and other gymnasts from the Beijing Summer Olympics.

The show featured PSA's by each of the four not-for profits partners. The two-hour special paired performances by entertainers, including Kenny Loggins, Cyndi Lauper and Carole King, with accompanying gymnastics routines to create a special program dedicated to empowering women to take action by gaining knowledge.



Members of U.S. Men's and Women's Olympic Gymnastics Teams
Photo Credit: Frank Haxton, Digiman Photography

Outreach partners include the American Society of Clinical Oncology and the Oncology Nursing Society. Official *Frosted Friends*, organizations dedicated to spreading the advocacy and education messages of "Frosted Pink with a Twist" include: the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Blue Thong Society, Coalition of Labor Union Women, Hadassah, National Alliance of Hispanic Health, National Association

of Female Executives, National Council of Women's Organizations, National Rural Health Association, National Women's Health Resource Center, Society for Women's Health Research and the YWCA-USA. ■

Low Literacy Cervical Cancer Educational Materials Developed

GCF, with support from the Partnership to End Cervical Cancer, has developed a Train-the-Trainer curriculum and public educational materials for a low literacy audience in both English and Spanish. The materials have been developed in partnership with the National Council of LaRaza and the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association. The content addresses concerns identified in publications and GCF's experience in evaluating existing materials. The content is designed at a very basic level with rich graphics content, and addresses both the emotional and financial barriers low income women face as they think about accessing cervical cancer screening. Participants in the sessions are directed to clinics offering low cost or free Pap testing and vaccination. Testing of the curriculum and materials took place during the summer of 2008 and will then be available for general use soon. ■

EDUCATION

GCF Announces Five 2009 Ovarian Cancer Survivors Courses

The Gynecologic Cancer Foundation is pleased to offer these FREE courses for all ovarian cancer survivors, friends, family members and others who are interested in hearing from the leading U.S. experts in ovarian cancer research and patient care. These experts will share new information about ovarian cancer research and treatment. Time for questions and answers, as well as networking with other survivors, will be provided.

A detailed schedule and registration information are available at www.thegcf.org or by calling 312.578.1439. All courses are held on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

DATE	LOCATION
February 7, 2009	San Antonio, TX
March 21, 2009	Phoenix, AZ
April 25, 2009	Cleveland, OH
May 16, 2009	St. Louis, MO
July 18, 2009	Baltimore, MD



“Fore” for GCF

This year’s Washington, DC Gynecologic Cancer Golf Tournament set both new attendance and financial records. Hosted by Tom Hammond, and Paige and Mark Anderson, the annual event benefits the Gynecologic Foundation (GCF).

Over 100 golfers teed up at the Bristow Manor Golf Club in nearby Virginia and raised \$32,000 for GCF.

“GCF is such a special organization to us. The work they do to educate women and their families about gynecologic cancers truly saves lives,” said Paige Anderson, a cervical cancer survivor. Mark, Paige’s husband, added “We continue to work hard for GCF through our annual golf tournament to raise awareness about these cancers with the hope that through knowledge women can take actions to avoid or lessen the impact of these cancers.”

Co-host Tom Hammond said, “This tournament and the cause it serves is a real focal point of the year for me. It is a win-win to have a great time playing golf while educating the community about gynecologic cancers.”

GCF thanks Tom Hammond and the Andersons for all their support. ■

Thank You for Supporting GCF

Your support is vital for GCF to continue to invest in the health of this and future generations. Please consider making your own investment. You can send your tax-deductible gift to GCF using the enclosed envelope, or visit www.thegcf.org, or by calling 312.578.1439.

For information on making a stock donation, including GCF in your will, or establishing a planned gift, please contact Janet Wykoff at 312.578.1439. ■

The *GCF Bulletin* is the official publication of the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation (GCF). This non-profit charitable foundation was established by the Society of Gynecologic Oncologists (SGO) to ensure public awareness of gynecologic cancer prevention, early diagnosis and proper treatment, as well as to support research and training related to gynecologic cancers. Information about GCF and its programs may be obtained by contacting GCF Headquarters at 230 W. Monroe, Suite 2528, Chicago, IL 60606.

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If you suspect or have been diagnosed with a reproductive cancer, like cervical cancer, endometrial (uterine) cancer or ovarian cancer, seek care first from a gynecologic oncologist, a specialist trained in treating these cancers. To find a nearby gynecologic oncologist, visit the Women's Cancer Network (www.wcn.org) "find-a-doctor" section.

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