



## CALIFORNIA

### Increasing Ovarian Cancer Awareness in California

Ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer death among American women.\* Each year, about 22,000 women in the United States are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and about 15,000 women die from it.\* Since there is no screening test for ovarian cancer (the Pap test checks for cervical cancer only), recognizing symptoms is crucial to diagnosing ovarian cancer early.

Until recently, ovarian cancer awareness advocates in California worked in local communities and had little communication with other groups. On June 26, 2009, 20 ovarian cancer survivors and founders of 16 local groups met to share ideas. This group became the California Ovarian Cancer Network.

A few months later, the network's Web site was launched to share information about local ovarian cancer resources and to draw attention to ovarian cancer efforts statewide. On August 15, 2010, California's first conference for ovarian cancer advocates, survivors, and medical professionals took place in Sacramento. The conference, Teal Impact: New Hopes and Future Directions, was named for the ovarian cancer awareness color, teal. Information was presented on the latest research and clinical trials, and attendees shared experiences. More than 80 people, including 38 ovarian cancer survivors, came to the conference.

A year after the Web site launched, a survey revealed a gap in member interaction. "The Web site is a good information-sharing tool for the public," members said, "but we also want to stay in touch with each other more regularly." As a result, a social networking site was built in May 2011. Through this social network, members can talk

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\*U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. *United States Cancer Statistics: 1999–2008 Incidence and Mortality Web-based Report*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute; 2012. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/uscs>.



to each other, post information about resources and upcoming events, upload photos, and customize a Web page for a local group.

New content attracts people to social media, so the network started an Ambassadorial Scholarship Program to enlist three members to take the lead in posting new content and inviting others to visit the site. The scholarship program also allowed the three ambassadors to travel to the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., where they officially represented the network, found ways to work with other groups, and learned about the latest developments in ovarian cancer research and advocacy. When they returned to California, each ambassador posted conference reports and photos on the Web site.

The California Ovarian Cancer Network has grown from a small group to a network that connects advocates all over the state in just a few years. Member collaboration will be vital to increase early detection and treatment of ovarian cancer.



*Ovarian cancer causes more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system. But when ovarian cancer is found in its early stages, treatment is most effective.*