

Ovarian Cancer Demonstration Project: Iowa Department of Public Health



Ovarian Cancer Facts

Ovarian cancer is the **5th** leading cause of cancer deaths¹ and the **1st** cause of gynecologic cancer death² in the U.S.

Nationally

- The incidence of ovarian cancer is **9.8 per 100,000** women.³
- The mortality rate of ovarian cancer is **6.3 per 100,000** women.³
- There are approximately **1,218** practicing gynecologic oncologists, approximately **9.3 per million** women, ages 18 and older.^{4,5}

Evidence suggests that treatment by gynecologic oncologists can increase survival among women with ovarian cancer.⁷ To increase survival from ovarian cancer, CDC funded a demonstration project to build evidence for strategies to increase knowledge and awareness of gynecologic oncologists' role in ovarian cancer and to increase receipt of ovarian cancer care by a gynecologic oncologist. The Iowa Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (CCCP) at the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) was one of three National CCCPs selected to implement and evaluate promising strategies with the potential for effectiveness.

Formative Studies

To inform the strategies of its demonstration project, the Iowa CCCP and its partners conducted telephone interviews with 10 health care providers to understand their attitudes about referring women to gynecologic oncologists and with 16 ovarian cancer survivors who were not treated by a gynecologic oncologist to understand barriers

Iowa

- The incidence of ovarian cancer is **8.4 per 100,000** women.³
- The mortality rate of ovarian cancer is **6.4 per 100,000** women.³
- There are approximately **6** practicing gynecologic oncologists, approximately **4.9 per million** women, ages 18 and older.^{4,6}

to getting care from a gynecologic oncologist in Iowa. Findings highlighted a need to address providers' perceptions of barriers, which were not mentioned by survivors. The interviews also showed that patients were not aware of the importance of, and did not have the confidence to request a referral to, a gynecologic oncologist for ovarian cancer care and treatment, as none of the survivors who were interviewed received a referral when they were diagnosed. Details on Iowa's formative studies methods and findings are published in the December 2020 issue of [Women's Health Report \(www.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/whr.2020.0090\)](http://www.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/whr.2020.0090).⁸

Implementation Activities

Based on these findings, the Iowa team implemented four approaches across two strategies to promote providers making a referral to a gynecologic oncologist for ovarian cancer treatment and to foster women's self-advocacy for requesting a referral to seek treatment for their ovarian cancer from a gynecologic oncologist.

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Strategy 1: Increasing Knowledge and Awareness of the Role and Importance of Gynecologic Oncologists

Provider Education



Patients with Ovarian Cancer: Improving Health Outcomes [PDF-310KB] (<https://canceriowa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Ovarian-Cancer-Handout-for-Providers.pdf>)

Description

This handout for providers highlights the perceived and actual barriers to receiving guideline-recommended treatment for ovarian cancer and describes the role of and importance of gynecologic oncologists. The handout lists options for referring patients to gynecologic oncologists.

Partners

- Iowa Cancer Registry
- University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC) Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Iowa Cancer Consortium

Evaluation Methods & Findings

- Conducted cognitive interviews with obstetrician-gynecologists (OB/GYNs) to get feedback on the handout.
- Received generally positive feedback from providers, who noted that the handout was concise and easy to read.



Ovarian Cancer in Iowa (<https://cme-learning.brown.edu/iowaOC>)

Description

A one-hour webinar for health care providers that addresses the state of ovarian cancer in Iowa and promotes the benefits of surgical referrals to gynecologic oncologists for ovarian cancer care from the perspectives of an ovarian cancer survivor and a gynecologic oncologist.

Partners

- Iowa Cancer Registry
- UIHC Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center
- IDPH
- Iowa Cancer Consortium
- Brown University's Office of Continuing Medical Education

Evaluation Methods & Findings

- Gathered participant demographic information and satisfaction through pre- and post-surveys.
- Before the webinar, 34.6% of participants agreed that they were likely to refer patients with confirmed or suspected ovarian cancer to a gynecologic oncologist.

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Patient Education



Understanding Your Ovarian Cancer Treatment [PDF-313KB] (<https://canceriowa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Handouts-for-patients-newly-diagnosed-with-ovarian-cancer.pdf>)

Description

An educational handout to inform women diagnosed with ovarian cancer about the basics of treatment and the importance of requesting a referral to a gynecologic oncologist, to identify questions about treatment options that they should ask their health care provider, and to encourage them to request a referral to a gynecologic oncologist.

Partners

- Iowa Cancer Registry
- UIHC Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Iowa Cancer Consortium
- NormaLeah Ovarian Cancer Initiative

Evaluation Methods & Findings

- Conducted cognitive interviews with six ovarian cancer survivors to obtain feedback on the handout.
- Received positive feedback that reinforced the importance of:
 - Avoiding the use of medical terms or explaining these terms if used.
 - Using text boxes and boldface font to call attention to important concepts.
 - Recognizing that women have the right to ask questions and have a say in deciding their course of treatment.

General Public Education



Dissemination of the 2020 Cancer in Iowa Report [PDF-1.1MB] (<https://shri.public-health.uiowa.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020-SHRI-Annual-Report.pdf>)

Description

The 2020 Cancer in Iowa Report, developed by the Iowa Cancer Registry, features a special section on ovarian cancer highlighting the importance of a receipt of care by a gynecologic oncologist.

Partners

- Iowa Cancer Registry
- Iowa Cancer Consortium
- Iowa Department of Public Health

Evaluation Methods & Findings

- Sent report to 1,581 provider email addresses.
- Tweeted message and report link to 720 followers.
- As of April 19, 2021, there were 761 downloads of the report from the Iowa Cancer Registry website.

Strategy 2: Improving Models of Care

Use of Referral Systems



Enhancing Use of Referral Systems

Description

The provider handout, [Patients with ovarian cancer: improving health outcomes \[PDF-310KB\]](https://canceriowa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Ovarian-Cancer-Handout-for-Providers.pdf) (<https://canceriowa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Ovarian-Cancer-Handout-for-Providers.pdf>), includes referral contact information (e.g., telephone number, weblink) to promote awareness and use of referral phone lines.

Partners

- Iowa Cancer Registry
- Iowa Cancer Consortium
- UIHC Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center

Evaluation Methods & Findings

- Conducted discussions with UIHC gynecologists and care coordinators to determine the best way for providers to refer patients to a gynecologic oncologist.
- Post-project, UIHC coordinators will administer a survey to measure changes in referral rates and provider satisfaction with the referral process.

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Considerations for Others Seeking to Implement Iowa's Strategies for Increasing Receipt of Care by a Gynecologic Oncologist

- Conduct formative studies to identify why women diagnosed with or suspected of having ovarian cancer are not referred to a gynecologic oncologist and to inform the selection of strategies needed to facilitate change.
- Test materials with ovarian cancer survivors and health care providers (OB/GYNs, primary care providers, gynecologic oncologists) to make sure materials address information gaps and are easy to read and understand.
- Engage partner organizations and professional networks to recruit ovarian cancer survivors and health care providers for formative studies and to test materials or processes.

- Work with other comprehensive cancer control programs to help troubleshoot challenges. Through the Rhode Island demonstration project, the Iowa team learned about and partnered with Brown University to offer continuing medical education (CME) credits at no cost to their webinar participants when their local university CME office could not offer the credits at no cost.

Additional Resources

- Ovarian Cancer Survivors: A Valuable Resource in Informing Development of Materials Aimed at Promoting Gynecologic Oncologists' Role in Ovarian Cancer Treatment
- Developing Education Materials for Women Diagnosed with Ovarian Cancer: Approach and Lessons Learned from Iowa's Ovarian Cancer Demonstration Project

¹ American Cancer Society. About Ovarian Cancer. <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/CRC/PDF/Public/8773.00.pdf>. [PDF-93KB] Last revised April 11, 2018.

² American Cancer Society. Key Statistics for Ovarian Cancer. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/ovarian-cancer/about/key-statistics.html>. Last revised January 12, 2018.

³ U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. U.S. Cancer Statistics Data Visualizations Tool, based on 2020 submission data (1999–2018): U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute; www.cdc.gov/cancer/dataviz, released in June 2021.

⁴ Foundation for Women's Cancer. Seek a Specialist. <https://specialist.foundationforwomenscancer.org/>

⁵ US Census Bureau. 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. United States Population by Age and Sex. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=Populations%20and%20People&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S0101&hidePreview=true>

⁶ US Census Bureau. 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Iowa Population by Age and Sex. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=0400000US19&tid=ACSST1Y2019.S0101&hidePreview=true>

⁷ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), Committee on the State of the Science in Ovarian Cancer Research; Board on Health Care Services; Institute of Medicine. *Ovarian Cancers: Evolving Paradigms in Research and Care*. National Academies Press (US); 2016.

⁸ Weeks K, West M, Lynch C, et al. Patient and provider perspectives on barriers to accessing gynecologic oncologists for ovarian cancer surgical care. *Women's Health Reports*. 2020;1(1):574-583. <http://doi.org/10.1089/whr.2020.0090>