



## OCRF SUMMARY OVERVIEW MARCH 2009

Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation March 2009 The OCRF has traditionally had a broad based funding objective to prosper basic research within Australia, since its inception in 2000. It is not generally aiming its research agenda at clinically based research studies as these are felt to be dealt with by the Australian Society for Gynaecological Oncology and the National Health and Medical Research Council. So far projects which have been supported include proteomics research based in South Australia, as well as supporting a new study in Adelaide on “Autoantibodies in ovarian cancer: their potential use as diagnostic markers”, under the direction of Associate Professor Martin Oehler, Dr Peter Hoffmann and Dr Carmela Ricciardelli, as well as a clinical study “Does Palliative Chemotherapy improve symptoms in women with recurrent ovarian cancer”, under the auspices of the Australian and New Zealand Gynaecological Oncology Group. Further research endeavours in New South Wales have been supported by employing a research nurse based at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital under the direction of Dr Chris Dalrymple and it is hoped that a similar arrangement can be progressed in Queensland at the Royal Women’s Hospital. Applications for basic science research are invited and all applications will be independently reviewed by non-OCRF reviewers. It is hoped that applications for research will be consistent with the stated aims of the OCRF and thus in broad terms be restricted to basic science research into the development of early detection systems as well as understanding the basic biology of ovarian cancer. Proposed screening tests for ovarian cancer have featured in the lay-press, both electronic and print, in recent months. The view of OCRF, consistent with the draft National Statement prepared by NBOCC, is that no test currently exists which meets acceptable standards of accuracy for population-based screening for ovarian cancer.

Australia has no mechanism in place as yet to evaluate or licence tests which claim to detect hidden diseases. Nevertheless, there has to be good evidence that a test is sensitive (ie, can reliably detect the disease whenever it is present) AND specific (ie, can rule out the disease in healthy persons). No test for ovarian cancer has been shown to meet acceptable levels for these criteria. In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration examines evidence that tests meet suitable standards, and has recently forced the withdrawal of one heavily marketed test which failed to meet minimum standards.

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