Factors that Affect Women’s Decisions About Ovarian Cancer Care

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Health Topics  Cancer

In 2009, more than 20,000 women were newly diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the United States, and more than 14,000 women died from the disease. Survival rates for ovarian cancer are generally higher among patients seen by a gynecologic oncologist and are achieved through the combination of specialized surgeries, chemotherapy, and post-treatment care. However, less than half of all women diagnosed with ovarian cancer receive care from a gynecologic oncologist. The purpose of this study is to understand the factors women and their physicians consider when making decisions about ovarian cancer treatment—particularly when making the decision of whether or not to seek care from a gynecologic oncologist. With better insight into those factors, the public health community can address the obstacles to receiving quality ovarian cancer care and reducing the burden of this cancer.

Researchers will ask women diagnosed with ovarian cancer to complete a phone-based survey within the first year of their diagnosis. Questions will address three broad categories:

- Predisposing factors that make a woman more inclined to access medical services and may include race, age, education, marital status, social support, and beliefs about ovarian cancer and treatment.
- Enabling factors that put a woman in a position where she is more able to access medical services and may include income, insurance, time, and ability to travel.
- Need factors that make a woman more aware of the need to access medical services and may include ovarian cancer diagnosis, referral to care, and other existing conditions.

The researchers will talk with physicians, who in the past five years have provided care to at least five ovarian cancer patients in Alabama, to gather their views on the challenges to ovarian cancer care, benefits of gynecologic oncologist care, and reasons why women may not be referred for gynecologic oncologist care. These physicians may vary in specialty and may even be gynecologic oncologists themselves.

The findings from this study will provide an understanding of the factors considered by women and their physicians when choosing ovarian cancer treatment, as well as the challenges to receiving treatment from gynecologic oncologists. This information may help future interventions to improve ovarian cancer treatment decision making, improve the quality of ovarian cancer care, and ultimately achieve longer survival rates of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

Research setting

No specific focus
Race or ethnicity
Black or African American | White

Gender
Women or girls

Age group
Adults (25-49 years) | Older adults (50 years and older)

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