

Media Release

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Ovarian cancer survivor appreciates mother's day

Ovarian cancer survivor Natasha Sims, of Greenwood, thanks her lucky stars that she will be spending this Mother's Day with her children and grandchildren.

She is also thankful that organizations like the Women and Infants Research Foundation (WIRF) are working on preventing gynaecological cancers.

Natasha, 48 at the time, was diagnosed with stage 3B ovarian cancer in 2013. For the best part of the year prior, she had symptoms of bloating and sought tests for a urinary tract infection, but it wasn't until she went to an emergency department for chest pain that she discovered the 9cm by 8cm tumour in her ovary.

"Two days after finding out I had cancer, I had major surgery to remove my ovaries and the tumour", said Natasha. "It was a shock, and my partner was away at the time – it was incredibly difficult".

"I then went through 16 weeks of chemotherapy treatment, lost my hair and faced all the symptoms associated with it like nausea and fatigue, and had to give up work".

Seven months later Natasha's cancer returned and she received further chemotherapy treatment, of which she has only recently completed.

WIRF and University of Western Australia (UWA) Professor Yee Leung, who is the Head of the Western Australian Gynaecologic Cancer Service (WAGCS) and Research Centre is researching causes and possible treatments for cancers like Natasha's.

"The WAGCS provides clinical care to over 96 percent of all gynaecological cancers diagnosed in WA, which makes the Service a rich source of data for cancer research projects", said Prof Leung. "We are fortunate to have access to a gynaecological cancer bio specimen bank to assist in the investigation of molecular and genetic causes of gynaecologic malignancy, and possible treatments for cervical and ovarian cancer".

"Cancer completely changed my outlook on life", said Natasha. "I now realise that every day is a blessing, but I am also choosing to look on the bright side and remain positive – cancer won't be the end of me".

Natasha is now getting back to enjoying life, while also raising awareness of the importance of an early diagnosis. Along with many cancer organisations around the world, she is helping to promote awareness of the disease on World Ovarian Cancer Day – May 8th.

"I encourage other women to act on any unusual symptoms and get them checked out. I hope that one day ovarian cancer can be prevented, and I think research is the key to this".

To find out more about WIRF's gynaecological cancer research, visit:

www.wirf.com.au/gynaecologiconcology

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Unlike cervical cancer, a pap smear does not usually detect ovarian cancer. The four most common symptoms of ovarian cancer include; abdominal or pelvic pain, increased abdominal size or persistent abdominal bloating, needing to urinate often or urgently, and difficulty eating or feeling full quickly.

Statistics from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare project that gynaecological cancer in Western Australia has risen 14 percent over the last five years (517 cases are projected in 2015).

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