

# Media Release

## Ovarian Cancer Research given a Helping Hand by Helen

8 May 2014

Helen Clark, of Mount Lawley, thanks her lucky stars that she is here to raise awareness of today's World Ovarian Cancer Day - May 8<sup>th</sup>. After a chance visit to her doctor for a burst ovarian cyst in 2010, Helen was shocked to receive a stage one ovarian cancer diagnosis.

Since making a full recovery, Helen has been passionately working to raise funds and awareness of ovarian cancer with the newly established Ladybird Foundation, which is supporting the Women and Infants Research Foundation's (WIRF) gynaecological cancer research.

"As a nurse and fitness instructor, I considered myself to be fairly in touch with my body", said Helen. "But even I made the mistake of thinking that bloating and abdominal pain was something like my appendix – it didn't even cross my mind that it would be cancer. What turned out to be a burst ovarian cyst was then stage one ovarian cancer".

Helen said she was incredibly lucky that her cancer was picked up by chance, and at an early stage. "It worried me that I didn't notice any serious symptoms, and I could see how easily my cancer could have been left until it was too late. I wanted to make others aware of ovarian cancer symptoms and the benefits of an early diagnosis", said Helen.

Helen has recently been involved in launching the Ladybird Foundation, a charity setup to support Western Australian breast and gynaecological cancer research. WIRF and University of Western Australia (UWA) Professor Yee Leung, who is the Head of the Western Australian Gynaecologic Cancer Service (WAGCS) based at King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH) and St John of God Subiaco Hospital, will be one of the initial recipients of funding from the Ladybird Foundation.

Professor Leung said "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. The Ladybird Foundation's support will enable the employment of a research assistant and the establishment of an electronic database of Western Australian gynaecological cancer clinical data in our Gynaecologic Cancer Research Centre. The database, combined with our recently established gynaecological cancer bio specimen bank, will assist in the investigation of molecular and genetic causes of gynaecologic malignancy, and possible treatments for cervical and ovarian cancer".

Early this year, the Research Centre also received funding from the [Cancer Research Trust](#) and the Jean Murray-Jones Trust to recruit a dedicated research professor.

As per statistics from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, there were 452 new cases of gynaecologic cancers in Western Australia in 2010 and this is projected to rise to 517 new cases by 2015. Unlike cervical cancer, ovarian cancer is not usually detected by a pap smear. 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.

Helen said "Although I was lucky to detect my cancer early, 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: <http://wirf.com.au/gynaecancer>

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