



Dear WOCA Advocate,

Wow, what a great year 2017 was!!! Thank you for your amazing support and generosity, without it we would not have been able to accomplish everything that we did. Because of your generosity, WOCA was able to expand on our current programs, while establishing new programs based on the needs of those we serve.

- After a website overhaul in the beginning of 2017, we were able to make several additions based on your feedback! In late 2017, an “Ask the Doctor” Blog was integrated into our website! Any interested party is able to submit a question, which will then be forwarded on to our Medical Advisory Board. The answers will then be made into a blog format and posted on our website for all to review.
- We kicked off our “Camp Mak-A-Dream” Scholarship (In Memory of Laura Clark - Hansen). Through this Scholarship, WOCA is able to send Ovarian Cancer Survivors to Camp Mak-A-Dream in Missoula, Montana. Because we received so much positive feedback regarding this program, we will be sending 4 survivors this year as well!
- We continued our Teal In Need Campaign (In honor of the Cathy Mislinski Legacy Gift). Our goal was to financially assist every woman that applies. We are happy to report we were able to do this for the 2nd consecutive year. The success of this program is rapidly expanding and we will be looking to increase the budget in years to come.
- Through Survivors Teaching Students® : Saving Women’s Lives - WOCA Survivor volunteers taught over 320 Medical Students throughout Wisconsin. We will be looking to add additional facilities statewide this year!
- WOCA launched a new year end giving campaign. We successfully raised over 90% of our goal. The most generated in any previous year end campaign! We simply could not do it without you!

We are excited about the changes and growth to come in 2018. On behalf of myself and the WOCA Board and Staff, I want to **THANK YOU** for your continued support of our organization. It is an honor that you trust WOCA with your funding, and allow us to make a meaningful impact of those affected by ovarian cancer throughout the state. We look forward to continuing our mission throughout 2018!

Sincerely,

Ashley A. Wagner  
Executive Director  
ashley.wagner@wisconsinovariancancer.org

***“No one is more cherished in  
this world than someone who  
lightens the burden of another.”  
Author Unknown***

# Why Sleep Should Be a Priority for Cancer Patients

If you're one of the millions of Americans who struggle to get sleep, our five tips can help you get the shut-eye you need.

By Katie Ressler



Winning the fight against cancer, every day.®

Most people experience poor sleep from time to time. However, for up TO 35% OF ADULTS, INSOMNIA PREVENTS THEM FROM GETTING ADEQUATE SLEEP. For cancer patients, that number may be even higher, possibly impacting AS HIGH AS 59% OF ALL CANCER PATIENTS.

A significant cause of sleep disturbance is sleep apnea. While many people with sleep apnea may not have issues falling asleep, this condition occurs when breathing repeatedly stops and starts during sleep and can cause many symptoms, including SLEEPINESS, FATIGUE, AND MORNING HEADACHES AMONG MANY OTHER ISSUES.

“Sleep disturbance is dynamic and non-discriminatory,” says DAVID VISCO, MD, Chief of Medicine & Medical Director of Sleep Medicine at Cancer Treatment Centers of America® (CTCA) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. “Many people have sleep disturbances before they are diagnosed with cancer. More than 20 MILLION AMERICANS HAVE SLEEP APNEA and many others experience insomnia or other sleep disturbances.”

Adding sleep to your priority list.

Sleep deprivation not only makes you feel downright terrible, but also it MIGHT INFLUENCE HOW WELL YOUR BODY FIGHTS CANCER. Chronic sleep deprivation impacts cortisol and melatonin levels, and both of these hormones have critical functions that may influence the behavior of cancer cells. Cortisol helps regulate immune system activity, including the release of natural killer cells that help the body battle cancer. The brain makes melatonin during sleep, which may have antioxidant properties that help prevent damage to cells that can lead to cancer.

“Your body is in a heightened stress state when you're sleep deprived,” explains Dr. Visco. “Sleep deprivation is associated with a number of health concerns, including cardiovascular events, metabolic conditions and neurologic events, among many others.”

“NINETY PERCENT or more of cancer patients experience cancer-related fatigue during treatment,” notes Dr. Visco. “If that fatigue exists even before treatment starts, it's critical to identify what is causing the problem. In one case, I had a patient who we diagnosed with sleep apnea and she began using a c-pap machine while she slept. She said she felt better after using the c-pap machine while undergoing chemotherapy than she had felt even before being diagnosed with cancer.”

What can you do now to improve your sleep?

“Whenever I hear someone is having a difficult time sleeping, sleep hygiene is the first topic I address,” says Dr. Visco. He suggests the following five tips to help anyone struggling with sleep:

1. Keep your daily schedule. Even on weekends or holidays, try to wake up and go to sleep at the same time every day. Our bodies operate on a 24-hour circadian rhythm and when it is disrupted, we feel more tired.
2. Avoid screen time before heading to bed. Better yet, leave screens out of your bedroom. Research has found that the light from screens like tablets or smartphones can suppress the production of melatonin, an essential sleep hormone.
3. Exercise often, and at the right time. Although exercise promotes restful sleep, doing it too late in the day may keep you up later than you expect. The physical activity from a cardio workout can increase adrenaline and brain activity, making it more difficult to wind down.
4. Watch your diet. Limit foods and drinks with caffeine after 12 p.m. to be safe. If you experience an occasional night of insomnia, the traditional advice of drinking a warm glass of milk can help you feel more restful. Another alternative is tart cherry juice, which is rich in melatonin.
5. Talk to your doctor. If sleep issues persistently keep you up at night, inform your doctor. Your doctor can help you determine the cause of your sleep problems and provide you with tips and recommended treatments to help you get the sleep you need.

# *Ovarian Cancer Survivors: The Fried Eggs–Sunny-Side Up*

*By: Joanie Shawhan*

“We should start a social group for ovarian cancer survivors,” the leader of our STS \* (Survivors Teaching Students) course said. “Not a support group, but a fun group.” We had just presented our ovarian cancer stories to a class of medical students in the STS program.

Our first meeting convened in a private room at a restaurant aptly called The Egg and I. We introduced ourselves, sharing snippets of our cancer journeys. Some of us have had recurrence, some are in treatment and some are cancer-free.

“I can make a contact list,” one member said. “I can also put together a binder with our photos and bios. With chemobrain it’s hard to remember names.”

We settled on meeting the fourth Tuesday of the month, each member taking a turn choosing the restaurant. Due to the nature of our conversations, we request a private room. We welcome new members, catch up, share info about new treatments, activities and fundraisers. Occasionally we plan to meet during the evening or on a Saturday in order to include those not available during the week.

## FUNDRAISERS

“Don’t forget to sign up for the Whisper Walk,” our leader reminds us. The Whisper Walk is named for the symptoms of ovarian cancer that whisper. The walk is a fundraiser for cancer research sponsored by WOCA (The Wisconsin Ovarian Cancer Alliance).

“We still have seating open for Sparkle of Hope.” This special evening celebrates the lives of women touched by gynecological cancers. The event raises funds for ongoing research at the University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center.

## ACTIVITIES

“I’m a docent at the museum. I can arrange a tour.”

“We have a place up north with a pontoon boat.”

“Our research doctor is offering a tour of his ovarian cancer lab.”

“Registration is open for ovarian cancer camp at Camp Mak-A-Dream in Missoula, Montana. It’s free of charge for ovarian cancer survivors. WOCA is offering scholarships to help cover airfare.”

## CATCH UP

“My CT scan is negative. The new study drug is working!” one member shared. Her Huskie had sniffed out her cancer and two recurrences before the doctors or scans could discover it.

“I just finished chemo!”

“I leave for Boston tomorrow,” one woman says. It is one of many trips she makes to Dana Farber every three weeks to participate in a drug trial. Her cancer is stable.

We are teal sisters, members of a club we never chose to join, fighting a battle we never wanted to fight. We are ovarian cancer survivors.

We are The Fried Eggs—Sunny-Side up.

Joanie Shawhan is an ovarian cancer survivor and a registered nurse. She writes encouraging articles for women undergoing chemotherapy. Publishing credits include *Coping with Cancer* magazine and *God Still Meets Needs*. She is a speaker in the Survivors Teaching Students program. For further information check out her website: [www.joanieshawhan.com](http://www.joanieshawhan.com).



For more information on joining “The Fried Eyes - Sunny Side Up” - Contact Mary Ann Johnson @ [radarj@chorus.net](mailto:radarj@chorus.net).

# *WE ARE... The Real Teal!!!*



Ali Mahdavi, MD  
Gynecologic Oncologist  
Ascension Columbia St. Mary's  
Milwaukee, WI

## Exciting time for ovarian cancer research

This is an exciting time to be involved in ovarian cancer research. For a long time, standard chemotherapy was the only treatment option for advanced ovarian cancer. In recurrent ovarian cancer, chemotherapy offered limited benefits at the cost of significant toxicity. Over the last two years, the results from several landmark clinical trials have demonstrated significant benefits from novel targeted therapies for women with advanced and/or recurrent ovarian cancer. These novel drugs selectively target cancer cells but spare healthy tissue. This mechanism is different from the indiscriminate effects of chemotherapy drugs on both cancer and healthy cells. For this reason, these targeted therapies are generally more effective and at the same time less toxic compared to standard chemotherapies.

In the last few months, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved or expanded the approval of five novel and targeted therapies from three classes of drugs (PARP inhibitors, checkpoint inhibitors, and anti-angiogenic drugs) in management of ovarian cancer. For the first time, we now witness longer than one year improvement in progression-free survival for certain group of patients with recurrent ovarian cancer. In addition, we now have clinical trials that offer these novel drugs (as single drug or in combination) to patients with aggressive types of ovarian cancer. The results from the Cancer Genome Atlas Project (TCGA) have literally decoded the genetic and molecular alterations in ovarian and other gynecologic cancers [1]. This information has allowed the researchers to target these defective molecular pathways to kill cancer cells.

There is still significant room for improvement in management of ovarian cancer. A recent important article highlights how poorly we are doing in identifying carriers of cancer susceptibility gene mutations [2,3]. The Society of Gynecologic Oncologists (SGO) recommends routine testing for germline BRCA mutations in patients with ovarian cancer. Between 15-20 percent of women with high grade ovarian cancer carry BRCA gene mutations. Identification of these mutations can guide cancer treatment and benefit family members from preventive measures such as surgical removal of the ovaries after childbearing. As Mary Claire King, an accomplished human geneticist has said, "To identify a woman as a carrier only after she develops cancer is a failure of cancer prevention".

Lastly, it is exciting to see that researchers are now paying more attention to the information provided directly by the patients without interpretation by healthcare providers. This concept known as "Patient Reported Outcomes" allows the women with ovarian cancer to express (without any filter) how they feel about their treatments and guide the physicians and researchers towards meaningful outcomes. It is truly an exciting time to see improvements in ovarian cancer treatment and to be an advocate for these brave women.

## REFERENCES

- 1- [cancergenome.nih.gov](http://cancergenome.nih.gov)
- 2- Childers CP, et al: National estimates of genetic testing in women with history of breast and ovarian cancer. J Clin Oncol 35: 3800-3806, 2017
- 3- Hughes KS: Genetic testing: what problem are we trying to solve? J Clin Oncol 35: 3789-3791, 2017



# “A Toast to Teal”

“A Toast to Teal” is WOCA’s annual Gala which was held on Friday, March 3rd at the Wisconsin Club. This year we had 130 attendees to share this great evening with. It was filled with delicious food, laughs, great silent and loud auction items, a wine cork pull and a gift card tree. New to this year’s event was our “Swarovski Search”. Tobin Jewelers graciously donated 5 teal swarovski bracelets, which we then raffled off to 5 lucky winners!

Our honored guest for the evening was Cheryl Figg, a Stage 3 Ovarian Cancer Survivor who lives her life to the fullest post diagnosis. Cheryl shared her courageous story of survivorship and left the audience feeling inspired. Figg stated,

*“I have made the choice to live my life to the very fullest...I know I am very lucky to still be here, 5 and ½ years later, but I am sorry that it took cancer to make me slow down, and pay attention to life. Each day you have on earth is a gift, it is up to you to take those gifts and turn them into more gifts. Hug those trees, see the whales, get up early to see the sun rise, climb those weird named mountains, be kind, show your love, hug your loved ones, fight for what you think is right and know even when you have been asked to go on a journey you did not choose, you can still make it a journey worthwhile taking.”*

Cheryl has become a dedicated member of WOCA and the ovarian cancer community. One of Cheryl’s many passions is teaching. She is able to merge both passions while sharing her story with medical students through WOCA’s Survivor’s Teaching Students (STS): Saving Women’s Lives ® program.

Some of the highlights of the evening were our 45 silent auction items. These items ranged from weekends getaways in Chicago, Lake Geneva, and a “Staycation” in Milwaukee. Other popular items were a Tito’s Moscow Mule Package, A Sky Diving Adventure, and a “Sports Day” package with tickets ranging from the Milwaukee Bucks, Brewers, and Admirals. If you would like to make a donation for the silent or loud auction for next years event, please contact the WOCA office at [friends@wisconsinovariancancer.org](mailto:friends@wisconsinovariancancer.org).

A Toast to Teal was a huge success raising over \$15,000 to help WOCA be able to continue its mission to provide education, support and fund research for Ovarian Cancer throughout Wisconsin.

Mark your calendars for next year. A Toast to Teal will be on Saturday, March 2nd, 2019 at the Wisconsin Club in downtown Milwaukee. We hope to see all of you there!!





This is the 6th Year of Crafts & Drafts and we can't think of a better way to kick off Milwaukee Beer Week! At Crafts & Drafts, you'll have a chance to try different beers from an amazing array of breweries, as well as being able to chat with brewery owners, brewmasters, and brewery representatives.

## Event Information:

**When:** April 15th, 2018

**Where:** Serb Hall  
5101 W. Oklahoma Ave  
Milwaukee WI, 53219

**Time:** TEAL & VIP: Noon- 5:00pm  
General Admission: 2:00pm-5:00pm

**Details:** TEAL: \$80 advance/ ONLINE ONLY- LIMITED AMOUNT  
VIP: \$70 Advance / \$75 At The Door  
General: \$55 Advance / \$60 At The Door

For more information visit: <http://www.craftsanddrafts.org/>

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This event is hosted by All Community Events. It is a 5k/10k chip timed run. A portion of the proceeds benefit the Wisconsin Ovarian Cancer Alliance.

May 13th, 2018

**Milwaukee:** Veteran's Park  
1750 N. Lincoln Memorial Drive  
Milwaukee WI, 53202

For more information visit:

<https://wisconsinruns.com/milwaukeeothersday5k#prereg>



# Teal in Need

*In honor of the Cathy Mislinski Legacy Gift.*

While we realize the financial burden that can come about due to ovarian cancer, WOCA's "Teal In Need" campaign focuses on financially assisting ovarian cancer patients while they are currently undergoing treatment or finished with treatment within the past 6 months. WOCA defines "treatment" as: chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, clinical trials, and/or therapy/program regimen.

**2nd Quarter application Period: June 1st-June 15th**

(Applications received before or after this period will not be considered)

**Week of July 2nd-** Awarded recipients will be notified and money will be dispersed.

**3rd Quarter application Period: September 1st-September 15th**

(Applications received before or after this period will not be considered)

**Week of October 1st-** Awarded recipients will be notified and money will be dispersed.

**4th Quarter application Period: December 1st-December 15th**

(Applications received before or after this period will not be considered)

**Week of December 18th-** Awarded recipients will be notified and money will be dispersed.

## Where to find "Teal in Need" Application:

**Go to:** <https://www.wisconsinovariancancer.org/>

**Under the "Support Tab" Click:** "Financial Support"

**Click:** "Teal in Need Application"

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**#1**  
cause of  
gynecological  
cancer deaths

**5th**  
cause of cancer-  
related deaths in  
women

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**22,280**  
New cases diagnosed  
each year

**Every 24  
Minutes**  
another woman is  
diagnosed with  
ovarian cancer in  
the U.S.

Photo inspired by <https://ocrfa.org/>



## 2018 Calendar of Events

### Crafts and Drafts - Spring Beer Fest

Sunday, April 15th, 2018  
Serb Hall - Milwaukee, WI

### Wines for Rose

Saturday, April 28th, 2018  
UnCorkt - Racine, WI

### Survivor's Brunch

Sunday, April 29th, 2018  
The Wisconsin Club - Milwaukee, WI

### WOCA's

### Nancy's Run, Rock, and Stroll

Saturday, September 8th, 2018  
Greenfield Park - West Allis

### WOCA's Whisper Walk

Sunday, September 23rd, 2018  
McKee Farms Park- Fitchburg, WI

## Interested in getting involved?

We have some upcoming  
volunteer opportunities listed below!  
Please find more information about  
the event and how to register as a  
volunteer on our website @  
[www.wisconsinovariancancer.org](http://www.wisconsinovariancancer.org).

### Crafts and Drafts - Spring Beer Fest

Sunday, April 15th, 2018  
(10am-2pm OR 2pm-6pm)  
Serb Hall - Milwaukee, WI

### All Community Events - Mother's Day 5K

Sunday, May 13th, 2018  
(6:30am - 11:30am)  
Veterans Park - Milwaukee, WI



### WOCA OFFICE:

13825 W. National Ave. Suite 103  
New Berlin, WI, 53151  
PHONE- 262-797-7804

### OFFICE HOURS:

Monday- Thursday-8am-4pm  
Friday- 8am-12pm  
Additional hours available upon request!

### WEBSITE:

[www.wisconsinovariancancer.org](http://www.wisconsinovariancancer.org)

### EMAIL:

[friends@wisconsinovariancancer.org](mailto:friends@wisconsinovariancancer.org)

### Connect with us on Social Media!

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Wisconsin Ovarian Cancer Alliance

#### Twitter -

@WIOvarianCancer

#### Instagram -

WI\_OVARIAN\_CANCER\_ALLIANCE

#### LinkedIn -

Wisconsin Ovarian Cancer Alliance

For Board Member Information,  
please visit our website.