



September 9, 2010

## GOC STATEMENT

### **Regarding: BC's Gynecologists change surgical method to protect against ovarian cancer: deaths can be reduced by 50 percent over 20 years**

Ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer death for women in Canada. Approximately 2500 women are diagnosed yearly and 1700 of them will die from it. Many of these women will be diagnosed before their 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Ovarian cancer is also known as the '*disease that whispers*'. This is because it is notoriously difficult to diagnose ovarian cancer in the early stages, as it fails to produce symptoms until it is already quite advanced. Strategies to prevent ovarian cancer, if effective, could save many lives.

The proposal made by the Division of Gynecologic Oncology of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver is very interesting and holds great promise to have an impact on ovarian cancer in the long term. Their proposal is based on what we have learned over the past 5-10 years which is that not all ovarian cancers behave or originate the same way. There is variation in the aggressiveness and mortality from the five different ovarian cancer histological cell types, the most frequent of which is called "serous histology". Recent research led by the Vancouver group and others has shown that these serous cancers most likely begin in the fallopian tube rather than the ovary. This subtype is also the most common (60%) and is also one of the most lethal.

As suggested by Drs. Finlayson and Miller from Vancouver, removing the fallopian tubes when performing surgery for either the removal of the uterus with ovarian conservation or at the time of a tubal ligation may in fact reduce the risk of developing a specific (serous) type of ovarian cancer for that individual. This procedure is a relatively simple addition to the planned operation, and should convey minimal risk to the patients when performed by a trained gynecologist.

GOC wishes to congratulate its members of the Vancouver group for translating their ongoing research into clinical practice and subsequently introducing it to the community through a provincial education program. This program, once shared with others across Canada, could translate into preventing one type of ovarian cancer, possibly the most virulent form of it, in many women.

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GOC looks forward to working with its wider membership to further define the research in this area, including the optimal safe strategies required for its implementation.

On behalf of the Executive and Council of The Society of Gynecologic Oncology of Canada,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Fung-Kee-Fung". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" and last name "Fung" being more prominent.

Michael Fung-Kee-Fung, M.B., BS, FRCSC  
President, The Society of Gynecologic Oncology of Canada