



Seeds of Hope

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Colleen O'Neill: Knowledge is POWER

When Colleen O'Neill describes the attributes of her beloved sunflowers, she could be talking about herself. "They are strong, cheerful and rise to meet the sun." That positive and hopeful image depicts how Colleen – a survivor of ovarian cancer – approaches her own life. "I have long treatments every week but I love life and I'm thrilled to be here."

Four years ago at age 46, Colleen, of Grand Valley (near Orangeville), Ontario underwent surgery and chemotherapy for stage III ovarian cancer. As a teenager, she lost her 52-year-old mother to breast cancer, and one of Colleen's sisters died of lung cancer in 2006. Colleen and other members of her family are considering genetic testing.

Since last September, she has been back in treatment as part of a clinical trial to keep her disease stable. Twice a week, Colleen goes to Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto – once for blood work and again for chemotherapy. She has returned to her full-time job in the book publishing industry and also helps her husband Ron with the family business, Munro's Country Garden.

Colleen recently reconnected with Ovarian Cancer Canada through the launch of the Electrolux Garden of Hope (www.gardenofhope.ca) – a real and virtual sunflower garden designed to raise awareness and funds for the Winners Walk of Hope. Colleen and Ron provided the sunflower seeds for the real garden at Electrolux headquarters in Mississauga, Ontario. Coincidentally, Munro's logo also features the sunflower.

Colleen is "at a place where I would like to be more involved in supporting Ovarian Cancer Canada with

their national awareness campaign." She has spent many hours in conversation with women of all ages, advocating that they become aware of the signs and symptoms of this quiet disease.

Colleen was not well enough last year to participate in the Winners Walk of Hope but this year, providing she continues to feel strong, she plans to do the walk at the Toronto Islands with a team of family and friends.

Her family business and her work in the corporate sector have taught Colleen the importance of partnerships to bring much-needed attention to worthy causes such as overcoming ovarian cancer. "I am so proud of Winners and Electrolux for being corporate partners with Ovarian Cancer Canada in the Winners Walk of Hope. It shows such great community responsibility and caring," Colleen says. "I think it's wonderful they are helping this disease to get more recognition. Knowledge is power and people need to be more aware."

Colleen planting the
Garden of Hope



Progress on many fronts!



By Elisabeth Ross
Chief Executive Officer

As the summer winds down, Ovarian Cancer Canada volunteers, sponsors and staff across the country are busy gearing up for September and our second annual National Ovarian Cancer Awareness

Elisabeth Ross

Month. The highlight is the Winners Walk of Hope on Sunday, September 13. I invite Canadians to help overcome ovarian cancer by joining us at our 14 walk locations from coast to coast and our Mini Walk sites in smaller communities across the country (see pages 4-5 and www.winnerswalkofhope.ca).

We are honoured to welcome back Winners as national title sponsor of the Winners Walk of Hope, Electrolux as national presenting sponsor, HomeSense and KPMG as national host sponsors, U Weight Loss Clinic as a national premier sponsor and *Chatelaine* as national magazine sponsor. A warm welcome to Blue Cross, who joins us this year as a new national premier sponsor. We look forward to our most successful walk ever!

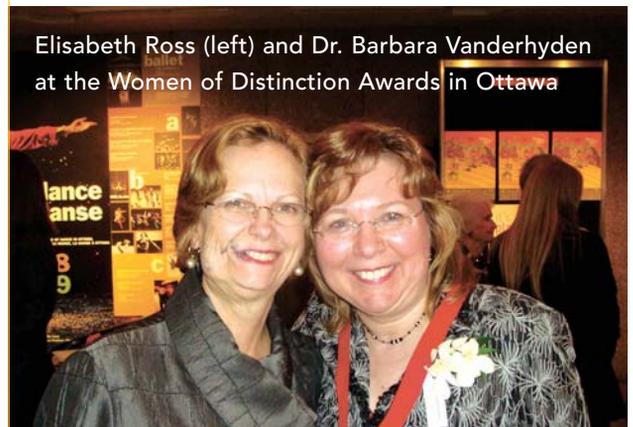
Ovarian Cancer Canada has announced funding of \$150,000 for five research projects focusing on the prevention and/or early detection of ovarian cancer (see page 6). Congratulations to principal researchers Dimcho Bachvarov, Patricia Tonin, Eva Turley, Barbara Vanderhyden and Yuzhuo Wang and their collaborators.

Congratulations to Dr. Vanderhyden, Corinne Boyer Chair in Ovarian Cancer Research and Chair of Ovarian Cancer Canada's Research Committee, who was also recently named the first recipient of the Rx&D Health Science Research Award at the YMCA-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards for the National Capital Region. The award recognizes enrichment to the community through excellent and

significant contributions in research or the application of research in the area of health science.

Ovarian Cancer Canada is launching new websites at www.ovariancanada.org and www.ovairecanada.org (watch *E-News* for launch date). Our thanks to Karen CinqMars, National Director of Marketing and Communications, who was at the helm of this major project to redesign our sites and provide the very latest information in a welcoming and user-friendly format.

For the first time, a number of our readers are receiving *Seeds of Hope/Semons l'espoir* electronically. Their requests for an e-version of Ovarian Cancer Canada's survivor/family newsletter mean less money spent on production and mailing, and we save some trees! We have also combined our English and French newsletters into a bilingual publication in order



to contain costs during these challenging economic times. We are confident that these changes and updates to our publication will continue to serve our readers well.

Enjoy the remainder of the summer. I hope to see many friends at the Ovarian Cancer Canada and Women's Executive Network's 2009 Ladies Golf Classic on August 25 at King's Riding Golf Club in King City, Ontario, and at the Winners Walk of Hope in September!

WANT TO SWITCH?

Interested in making the switch from a hardcopy to an electronic version of *Seeds of Hope*? Just send an email to seeds@ovariancanada.org with the following:

- your name
- mailing address where you now receive the hardcopy newsletter
- email address where you would like to receive the electronic newsletter in the future.



Extending our reach

A new partnership with Princess Margaret Hospital, Canada's largest cancer treatment and research centre, and a creative twist on delivery of our Telephone Education Series will help Ovarian Cancer Canada to reach out to more survivors and their families than ever before.

"We need to be continuously looking at ways to connect women with ovarian cancer and their caregivers across Canada to one another and to our education programs by using the technology that's available to us," says Fran Turner, Ovarian Cancer Canada's National Director of Programs.

Ovarian Cancer Canada will organize forums and chat rooms on ovarian cancer on Princess Margaret's Caring Voices website (www.caringvoices.ca), an online community for cancer survivors. The forums operate like an online message board by providing a platform for women and caregivers to have ongoing conversations about ovarian cancer.

Chat rooms will be held on specific topics at pre-scheduled dates and times. Topics will include those from Ovarian Cancer Canada's archived Telephone Education Series that are posted on YouTube. Participants will be asked to listen to the YouTube presentation in advance and then during the chat room, they can submit questions to an expert who will respond in real time to those registered for the session. Although Caring Voices is currently offered in English, the

partners are committed to increasing the bilingual capacity of this service.

Ovarian Cancer Canada will also continue its ongoing bilingual national Telephone Education Series by hosting three sessions between the fall of 2009 and the spring of 2010. These sessions will be recorded and posted on YouTube in order to build the archive. In addition, Ovarian Cancer Canada's regional offices will offer regional Telephone Education sessions on topics of local interest, in the official languages of choice for that region and at an appropriate time of day.

"We are excited about the regional teleconferences because they offer the opportunity to build a regional community of survivors and caregivers, and expert speakers will also come from that region," explains Iris Pison, Ovarian Cancer Canada Program Manager. Regional teleconferences allow for a time of day that is best for that time zone while national teleconferences take into account the country's five time zones.

If you have suggestions for topics to be explored on Caring Voices or the Telephone Education Series, drop a note to info@ovariancanada.org. Schedules will be posted at www.ovariancanada.org and advertised in E-News.

Seeds of Hope

Seeds of Hope, the newsletter of Ovarian Cancer Canada, is published to inform and support women and their families who are affected by ovarian cancer. Readers' contributions, comments and questions are welcome: seeds@ovariancanada.org or toll free 1-877-413-7970. Charitable Registration No.: 87297 4845 RR0001



Listen up!

www.youtube.com/ovariancancercanada

An archive of Ovarian Cancer Canada's Telephone Education Series – ranging from the benefits of laughter therapy and exercise to the latest information on clinical trials, recurrence, fatigue, chemo brain and much more. A "must listen" for women and caregivers who want to know more about a variety of survivorship issues and topics.

WINNERS WALK OF HOPE

In memory,
in honour,
in celebration

“She told me I was a great mother, a strong woman and that I could handle her death.” Bev Morrison of Guysborough County, Nova Scotia, took the words of her daughter, Stephanie O’Neill, to heart. And when Stephanie died of ovarian cancer in May 2008 at age 27, Bev and her daughter Jennifer found several ways to honour Stephanie and to take action against the disease that claimed their daughter, sister and the young wife, who loved life and found joy in her role as a personal care worker in a nursing home.

Later in 2008, Jennifer gave birth to her second child – a baby girl she named Stephanie in memory of her sister. And in May of this year, Bev and Jennifer hosted the first Mini Winners Walk of Hope for 2009. The

event drew about 200 people from across Guysborough County and raised over \$12,000 for Ovarian Cancer Canada. It was an outpouring of community support in celebration of Stephanie’s life that her family will never forget.

“We geared the Mini Walk toward Stephanie’s memory and getting the awareness message out about ovarian cancer,” says Bev. “Stephanie would be happy and very proud. She’d say, ‘Way to go, Mom.’ She was a bubbly person who had a giggle from the bottom of her toes.”

The Guysborough County Mini Walk in the tiny village of Port Felix was an inspiring launch to this year’s



Winners Walk of Hope, which is taking place in 14 major sites across Canada on Sunday, September 13. Several dozen Mini Walks are planned in smaller communities throughout the country.

Bev and her family will also be at the Halifax Winners Walk of Hope in September, where Stephanie participated for two years. Bev will be a guest speaker and share Stephanie’s story. “I think it’s really important for women – and young women especially – to know the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer,” says Bev, who hopes to make the Guysborough Mini Walk an annual event. If you are interested in holding a Mini Winners Walk of Hope in 2009, please contact Brittini at 1-877-413-7970, ext. 232 for more information.

Walk the walk!

- The **Winners Walk of Hope** is set for **Sunday, September 13, 2009** in Victoria, Vancouver and Comox Valley, BC; Edmonton and Calgary, AB; Saskatoon, SK; Winnipeg, MB; Windsor, Toronto and Ottawa, ON; Montreal, QC;



Some of the Guysborough Mini Walkers



Jennifer, baby Stephanie and Bev

date and links to online postings of this amazing original song by Frazer Mac, a university student and aspiring singer/songwriter.

- Heartfelt thanks from Ovarian Cancer Canada, survivors and families to our 2009 national sponsors: Winners, national title sponsor; Electrolux, national presenting sponsor; HomeSense and KPMG, national host sponsors; U Weight Loss Clinic and Blue Cross, national premier sponsors; and *Chatelaine*, national magazine sponsor. We are also grateful to the many local sponsors for their support of the walks in communities across Canada.

Moncton, NB; Halifax, NS; and St. John's, NL. In addition, many Mini Walks are taking place in communities across the country. If distance or health setbacks are a barrier to participation, register as a Virtual Walker and you will be recognized at one of our walk locations on the Path of Hope, bringing inspiration to those in attendance on walk day.

- Visit www.winnerswalkofhope.ca or call toll free 1-877-413-7970 to register, join or form a team, pledge a walker or volunteer to work at a walk site.
- Founded in 2002 by Peggy Truscott, a woman who had ovarian cancer and was a

passionate volunteer for Ovarian Cancer Canada, to date the walk has raised \$4.5-million for ovarian cancer research, awareness, and support and education programs for women and families living with the disease. Fundraising is key to finding a cure and helping women and families affected by ovarian cancer.

- Watch for the 2009 Winners Walk of Hope radio and TV public service announcements featuring Elizabeth Manley, Olympic figure skating silver medalist (English) and Paule Primeau, an ovarian cancer survivor (French).
- The walk is being celebrated in song! Watch *E-News* for the launch



I'm walking because...

I'm walking because ovarian cancer is the most serious of all gynecological cancers. It's known as "the disease that whispers." The signs and symptoms are vague and easily missed.

I'm walking because there is NO reliable early detection test. Did you know that?

I'm walking because friends of mine are ovarian cancer survivors – and I am walking in honour of friends who sadly were taken away from us.

Deb Hulme



Funding for early detection research

Early detection of ovarian cancer is one of the highest priorities for Ovarian Cancer Canada as it has the most significant impact on outcomes for women with the disease. This summer, grants were awarded to five pilot projects on the prevention and/or early detection of ovarian cancer, totaling \$150,000.

This is the second year of the program, which was designed to foster growth in prevention and early detection research among Canada's leading research institutions. Applications were evaluated by a grants review panel. The following are the funded projects, listed in random order with the name of the principal researcher and their research institution:

Dimcho Bachvarov, Laval University

Epithelial ovarian cancer is the leading cause of death from gynecological cancers due to the asymptomatic nature of the disease, a lack of early detection markers and the development of resistance to current chemotherapy treatment. This pilot project will test the hypothesis that MicroRNAs (miRNAs) could be novel, clinically useful and non-invasive biomarkers for blood-based early detection of epithelial ovarian cancer.

Patricia Tonin, The Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre & McGill University

The origins of ovarian cancer are unknown. It has been proposed that the serous subtype of ovarian cancer (the most common subtype) could arise from more benign counterparts of the disease such as benign or borderline ovarian tumours. However, evidence for this type of tumour progression is circumstantial. Using a new technology called Illumina BeadArray, this study will survey genomic anomalies in serous borderline and benign ovarian tumours. The largest survey of its kind for these tumours, the study will address research questions related to tumour progression and may identify markers of early disease detection.

Eva Turley, London Regional Cancer Program, The University of Western Ontario

This study proposes that early during ovarian tumour growth, a wound healing-like response is triggered, and that this feature can be exploited in developing a biomarker screening strategy for the early detection of ovarian cancer. The objective will be to test this hypothesis directly using

ovarian cancer tissue samples and generating a rapid and accurate screening platform which may have the potential for future clinical use.

Barbara Vanderhyden, University of Ottawa/ Ottawa Health Research Institute

Identification of normal ovarian stem cells before they become cancer stem cells may provide opportunities to prevent or detect their transition to cancer stem cells. Experiments conducted in this pilot project will define the roles of ovarian stem cells and BRCA1 in the initiation of tumour growth. Understanding this process will hopefully reveal unique characteristics of ovarian stem cells and thereby identify potential strategies to target or inhibit them.

Yuzhuo Wang, BC Cancer Research Agency

The most common ovarian malignancy is high grade serous carcinoma, accounting for 65 to 70% of new diagnoses. Most of these patients present at late clinical stages when long-term survival rates are less than 30%. This study will help determine if two very promising MicroRNAs display the sensitivity and specificity required for effective detection of high grade serous carcinoma in a clinical setting.

CHECK THESE OUT

www.g-o-c.org or www.ovariancanada.org
The Society of Gynecologic Oncologists of Canada Statement on CA125 Monitoring in the Management of Recurrent Ovarian Cancer

www.bccancer.bc.ca
Ovarian Cancer Research Program (OvCaRe) at BC Cancer Agency and Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute's discovery of a mutation in genetic code that appears to cause granulosa cell tumours, a rare form of ovarian cancer