Welcome to the second issue of the OPAL newsletter. In this summer edition we will update you on the study’s progress in the last 6 months, provide you with some information about OPAL’s contribution to a large international genetic study, recent fundraising events, and tell you about some of our future plans.

Penny Webb, Principal Investigator of OPAL

Recruitment update

We started the OPAL study in June 2012 and, to date, 550 women have consented to take part. This is fantastic and more than half of our target of 1000 women. We will continue recruiting new participants until the end of 2014. So far we have received 2600 completed questionnaires and 400 women have kindly donated a blood sample. As you can see from the graphs below participants come from all across Australia, with most from NSW, Victoria and Queensland, they range in age from 22 to 79 and the average age is 59 years.

OPAL contributing to a new international study

OPAL has been invited to join a very exciting international study. For those of you who have given permission, this study will look at material from OPAL women and about 50,000 other women worldwide to help us understand the genetics of ovarian cancer. We will provide samples and some basic information from the OPAL questionnaires (e.g. age, number of children, use of oral contraceptive pill) to the investigators, but will not provide any personal information about study participants. The study will take about a year to complete and we will let you know when we have some results to report.

Recently we have heard of a new study called OVQUEST. This study is asking women with ovarian cancer very similar questions to our study. It is completely separate from OPAL and we don’t want anyone to get confused between the two projects. We hope you will continue to participate in OPAL but if you are invited to take part in OVQUEST you are very welcome to do both studies.
Recent fundraising events

We would like to acknowledge the following groups that have recently been involved in raising funds for ovarian cancer research at QIMR Berghofer.

The inaugural **Weekend to End Women’s Cancers**, Queensland’s largest walk for women’s cancers, was held in October. The 1,346 participants, including our OPAL nurses Sue Brown and Karen Martin, and investigator Chris Nagle, helped raise **$3.5 million** for cancer research at QIMR Berghofer and the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital.

OPAL team members Penny Webb, Sue Brown and Karen Martin recently took part in the **Carmel Farrow Annual Walk** at Mapleton on the Sunshine Coast. The 7km walk organised by Carmel’s husband Ken Farrow raised funds for ovarian cancer research at QIMR Berghofer.

**A morning tea in Canberra** - On a beautiful sunny morning on the 21st October, Sam Ning held a picnic in the park to support her friend Sandy Zanker who is an OPAL participant. Sandy enjoyed catching up with old and new friends and gave a speech when cutting the special blue butterfly cake! Around 50 people came along to enjoy lots of delicious food and everyone who attended gave a donation. There was also a jelly bean guessing contest and a raffle. At the end of the day a very impressive amount had been raised for OPAL.

Medicare

We would like to thank the **300 OPAL women** who have already provided consent for us to access their Medicare records. We are asking women to do this to help us find out about different treatments and medicines that may help prevent ovarian cancer from recurring.

For those of you who have recently joined OPAL or who have not yet had a chance to reply, we have enclosed a letter explaining the Medicare consent. If you are happy for us to access your Medicare information we would be grateful if you could complete the consent form and send it back to us in the reply paid envelope.

If you do not wish to consent to this aspect of the study, please tick the box on the letter and return it in the reply paid envelope.