Welcome to the fourth issue of the OPAL newsletter. In this summer edition we will update you on the study’s progress, and tell you about some other things that have been happening in the last 6 months.

**Penny Webb, Principal Investigator of OPAL**

**Study update**

Across Australia, 868 women have now consented to take part in the OPAL Study. This is fantastic and we hope to reach our target of 1000 women by about April 2015. So far we have received more than 4,000 completed questionnaires and 660 women have kindly donated a blood sample making OPAL the first and largest study of its type in the world. When everybody in the study has completed their 6-Month questionnaire we will be able to start analysing the information we are collecting. Some of the first questions we want to answer are:

- **‘When will I feel normal again?’**
  A question many women ask when they finish chemotherapy.

- **‘Does lifestyle affect side-effects during chemotherapy?’**
  To identify whether lifestyle changes might help women reduce the levels of side-effects they experience during treatment.

As an example, the graph below shows the level of symptoms and side-effects reported by women. Note that the maximum possible score is 72 and this means no symptoms; the lower the score is, the worse the symptoms are. The purple bars show that although many women have low scores (= bad symptoms) when they are coming to the end of their chemotherapy, some women have high scores even at this difficult time. We want to find out why symptoms are so bad for some women but not for others so that we can try to help women avoid symptoms while they are having treatment. The blue bars show the good news which is that 3 months after finishing treatment, most women have quite high scores (= few symptoms).

**Medicare**

We would like to thank the 454 OPAL women who have already provided consent for us to access their Medicare records. 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 process (we ask women for this to help us find out about treatments and medicines that may help prevent ovarian cancer from recurring). 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.
Twelve members of the OPAL team recently attended the 15th Meeting of the International Gynecologic Cancer Society at the Convention Centre in Melbourne. The conference, which is held every 2 years, provided the opportunity for the OPAL team to hear about the latest clinical advances as well as international developments in research, practice and treatment for the holistic care of women with gynaecological cancer.

Sue O’Brien (QLD) and Jayne Maidens (NSW) were lucky recipients of the Australian and New Zealand Gynaecological Oncology Group Travel Grants. We thank ANZGOG for their generosity.

If you are finding it hard to cope....

A diagnosis of cancer can impact on all aspects of life and this may affect you emotionally as well as physically. If you are finding it hard to cope emotionally we recommend that you talk to someone about this.

The best person to talk to would be your treating doctor or GP, but if you do not want to talk to them you could contact your nearest Women’s Health Centre or Community Health Centre or ring the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20 (local call) between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday.

Ovarian Cancer in the news

The Brisbane Courier Mail recently featured the story of one of our OPAL participants, Rosalie Andrew. Rosalie was living with ovarian cancer but didn't know it until she read an article in the Courier Mail body+soul section which prompted her to investigate what she thought was a tummy condition.

Read Rosalie's full story on our webpage at http://opalstudy.qimrberghofer.edu.au/

Ovarian Cancer Australia launches its National Action Plan

Ovarian Cancer Australia, together with stakeholders, recently launched a National Action Plan for Ovarian Cancer Research setting out urgent priorities for the way in which Australia tackles ovarian cancer research.

This is the first time a national plan has been developed for ovarian cancer and for the first time provides a priority-driven focus for investment, unifying the efforts and providing a blueprint for researchers and funders from around Australia. It also includes a Charter setting out principles for ovarian cancer research excellence and calls for researchers to align with these.

To read more about the National Action Plan go to: http://ovariancancer.net.au/research/national-action-plan-for-ovarian-cancer-research/