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July 1, 2014

Amanda Davis
adavis@ovariancancer.org
(202) 517-6402

Ovarian Cancer National Alliance Statement on Annual Pelvic Exams

Pelvic Exams One of Several Tools Used to Diagnose Ovarian Cancer; Not Useful as an Early Detection Test

Washington, DC—The American College of Physicians recently recommended that women do not need to have a pelvic exam on an annual basis. Following is a response from Ovarian Cancer National Alliance CEO Calaneet Balas regarding the new recommendations:

“Ovarian cancer is one of the deadliest cancers for women, in part because there is no effective early detection test. Current evidence suggests that the pelvic exam is not helpful as a routine screening test for women with an average risk of developing ovarian cancer. We hope that this will change, and we work every day to secure funding for research that might lead to an effective screening test and new treatments to save women’s lives.

“We recommend that women see their doctors regularly, and discuss risk factors such as a family history of ovarian or breast cancer, along with any symptoms that are new or unusual. Studies have found that many women with ovarian cancer experience symptoms that include bloating, pelvic or abdominal pain, difficulty eating and urinary problems. For women who experience symptoms, the pelvic exam is one of three tools that may be used to help diagnose the disease, along with transvaginal ultrasound and a blood test that measures the protein CA-125.

“Some women have an increased risk of ovarian cancer due to their genetics or family history; these women should speak with their doctors about whether routine monitoring, including regular pelvic exams, would be helpful for them. Until we have an effective early detection test, we encourage all women to learn about the symptoms of ovarian cancer and factors that can increase their risk. We also recommend that health

providers evaluate women for their risk of ovarian cancer, discuss the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer with patients and refer high-risk women for genetic services.”

[Click here for more information about ovarian cancer symptoms](#), diagnosis and risk factors.

The Ovarian Cancer National Alliance is a powerful voice for everyone touched by ovarian cancer. We connect survivors, women at risk, caregivers and health providers with the information and resources they need. We ensure that ovarian cancer is a priority for lawmakers and agencies in Washington, DC, and throughout the country. We help our community raise their voices on behalf of every life that has been affected by this disease.

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For more information, or to schedule an interview, please contact Amanda Davis at adavis@ovariancancer.org or (202) 517-6402.