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SILENT NO MORE MARATHON SWIM FOR OVARIAN CANCER

Rochester, MN – At 5 am on Friday, May 19, 52-year-old Mary Johnson will begin a solo 12-hour marathon swim at the Rochester Area Family YMCA to raise awareness of ovarian cancer and raise funds to support the programs of Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance (MOCA).

Most days, after working as a chaplain at Mayo Clinic in the gynecology department, Ms. Johnson heads to the pool. She started distance swimming seven years ago and finds it to be a great stress reliever. The quietness of the sport gives her the opportunity to reflect on her day and pray for women who are in the hospital. “I came up with the idea of doing a marathon swim as a way to show support for women who have been diagnosed with ovarian cancer and for their families and friends who love them,” explained Ms. Johnson.

“We are so pleased that Mary is undertaking this marathon swim,” said Kathleen Gavin, MOCA’s executive director. “We greatly appreciate her effort to raise awareness of ovarian cancer in southern Minnesota. Together, we will work to better educate the public about the symptoms of the disease and the importance of early detection.”

The Rochester Area Family YMCA, located at 709 First Avenue SW, has donated a lane of the pool for Ms. Johnson to use for the duration of her swim.

For more information, or to make a contribution to the marathon swim, visit MOCA’s web site: www.mnovarian.org. Or call MOCA, **952/890-8775**.

Donations received from Ms. Johnson’s marathon swim will be dedicated to MOCA’s mission of funding ovarian cancer research, raising awareness of the disease and providing support for women with ovarian cancer and their families. In the past six years, MOCA has awarded more than \$1.3 million for research in Minnesota.

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Facts about Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance (MOCA)

- Founded in 1999 by a small group of ovarian cancer survivors
- MOCA's mission is to fund ovarian cancer research, raise awareness of the disease and provide support to women with ovarian cancer and their families.
- In the past five years, MOCA has awarded more than \$1.3 million for ovarian cancer research in Minnesota.

Symptoms of Ovarian Cancer

- Abdominal pain, pressure or bloating
- Abnormal changes in bowel or bladder patterns
- Persistent digestive problems
- Excessive fatigue, backache
- Abnormal post-menopausal bleeding
- Pain during intercourse
- Weight gain or loss
- Change in appetite
- Increased waist line

How is Ovarian Cancer Detected?

If a woman suffers from any or all of the symptoms listed above consistently for 4-6 weeks, she should consult with a healthcare provider and ask for a combination of the following three things:

- Vaginal/rectal exam
- Transvaginal ultrasound
- CA125 blood test

Unlike the Pap smear which screens for cervical cancer and the mammogram for breast cancer, there is currently no consistently reliable test available to detect ovarian cancer in its early stages.

If ovarian cancer is suspected, consult a gynecologic oncologist.

Facts about Ovarian Cancer

- Ovarian cancer affects 1 in 57 women.
- It can occur at any age.
- When detected early and treated properly, more than 90% of the women diagnosed will survive longer than five years.
- Almost 70% of women with the disease are diagnosed in advanced stages when the chance of five-year rate is only about 25%.



General Ovarian Cancer Statistics

- Ovarian cancer is the deadliest of the gynecologic cancers. It is the fifth leading cause of cancer deaths among U.S. women.
- It is expected that more than 25,000 women will be diagnosed with the disease this year and an estimated 16,000 will die from it.

Risk Factors

- **Increasing age** – Although ovarian cancer can strike women at any age, 56% of women diagnosed with the disease are older than 65.

The incidence increases dramatically after the age of 50 and peaks between the ages of 55 and 65.

As a result, it is important for women to continue regular gynecologic exams, even after childbearing is complete.

- **Having a family or personal history of ovarian cancer, breast or colon cancer** – Approximately 5-10% of ovarian cancer cases are associated with hereditary risk. Women with personal or family histories of these types of cancer are more likely to develop ovarian cancer before age 50.
- **Not bearing children** – The risk of developing ovarian cancer is reduced with each subsequent pregnancy.

The vast majority of women diagnosed with ovarian cancer (90%) do not have a hereditary link to the disease.

Risk Reduction

At this time, it is impossible to completely eliminate a woman's risk for ovarian cancer, but experts have established that the following can **reduce** a woman's risk of ovarian cancer:

- **Oral contraceptives** – Regular use reduces the risk of ovarian cancer by 40-50% when taken for at least five years. Several clinical studies have reported that the effects last for years after pill use has ceased.
- **Pregnancy and breast-feeding**
- **Tubal ligation**
- **Hysterectomy**
- **Removal of the ovaries** (prophylactic oophorectomy) This procedure is usually suggested only for women at very high risk – those with two or more first-degree relatives with ovarian cancer or ovarian and breast cancer.