

Average-risk women overestimate ovarian cancer risk

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(HealthDay)—Average-risk, postmenopausal women overestimate their risk of ovarian cancer, but report low cancer worry, according to a study published in the March issue of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*.

Laura L. Holman, M.D., from the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, and colleagues surveyed 925 average-risk, [postmenopausal women](#) enrolled in the normal-risk ovarian screening study. The authors sought to assess the women's baseline knowledge of [ovarian cancer](#) risk and perceptions toward ovarian cancer screening (OCS). Baseline surveys included risk perception, the Cancer Worry Scale, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), and the Short Form-36 Health Survey, as well as surveys relating to [risk perception](#) and OCS acceptability.

The researchers found that participants estimated the mean lifetime ovarian cancer risk as 29.9 percent, considerably higher than the actual risk of 1.4 percent in the United States. More than one-third (35.4 percent) of participants estimated their lifetime risk to be ≥ 50 percent, and only 2.8 percent estimated their risk correctly. Cancer worry was low, with a median score of 7 out of 24, and anxiety was similar to published norms for this age group (STAI-State and STAI-Trait scores of 30 and 29, respectively, out of 80). Almost all respondents (97.2 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that the benefits of OCS outweighed the difficulties. Reluctance to undergo OCS was rarely due to time constraints, pain, or embarrassment (1.1, 2.0, and 1.9 percent, respectively).

"The discrepancy between knowledge of and attitudes toward ovarian cancer risk highlights the need for educational efforts in this area," the authors write.

One author disclosed financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry. A second author is a faculty member at Massachusetts General Hospital, which has licensed the Risk of Ovarian Cancer Algorithm.

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