

WOMEN SPEAK OUT ON GYNECOLOGIC CANCERS

A Public Opinion Study for Research!America

August 2005

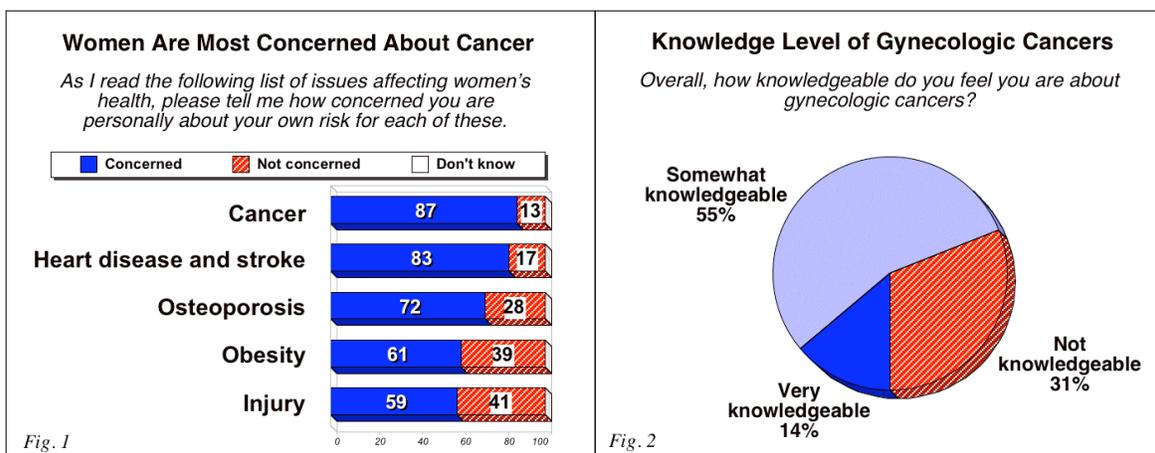
Research!America has been gauging public opinion on people's attitudes toward medical, health and scientific research since 1992. Results of the recent poll among women show a high level of support and value for research. These poll responses indicate there is an overwhelming belief that research is important and is a high priority among women, particularly in relation to gynecologic cancers.

WOMEN ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT CANCER, BUT REGISTER LIMITED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GYNECOLOGIC CANCERS

Cancer ranks as the top health concern among women, from a list of health issues affecting women (see figure 1). In fact, 87% of American women say they are concerned about their risk for cancer, with a majority (52%) *very* concerned. Heart disease and stroke rank next, with 83% concerned and 45% *very* concerned about their risk. Osteoporosis, obesity and injury all fall lower on the list of concerns.

Gynecologic cancers are of significant concern to women. Seventy percent report concern about their risk for ovarian cancer, while 68% are concerned about cervical cancer and 66% are concerned about uterine cancer.

Despite their concern, nearly one-third of American women feel they are not knowledgeable about gynecologic cancers, and the majority (55%) feel they are only somewhat knowledgeable (see figure 2). Fourteen percent say they are very knowledgeable about gynecologic cancers.



WOMEN ARE UNINFORMED ABOUT RISK FACTORS AND SYMPTOMS

Over half of American women (54%) believe they are at risk of developing a gynecologic cancer in their lifetime, while 43% do not feel they are at risk (see figure 3). Women aged 35 to 44 are most likely to report feeling at risk, while those who do not feel they are at risk of developing a gynecologic cancer tend to be those aged 65 and over.

A plurality of 45% are not aware of any of the risk factors for developing a gynecologic cancer (see figure 4). One-in-five mentions family history or a genetic predisposition, while all other risk factors are cited by fewer than 10% of respondents. Nine percent mention smoking, followed by exposure to certain viruses or STDs (6%), multiple sex partners (5%), obesity (2%), and hormones (2%).

Even fewer women are aware of any factors decreasing their risk for developing gynecologic cancers (see figure 5). Fifty-seven percent are unable to name any factors decreasing their risk, although 12% suggest that a healthy lifestyle or diet may help. Seven percent say regular checkups can help reduce the risk, while 6% mention pap smears. Two percent are aware of the potentially beneficial effect of birth control pills in reducing risk, and another 2% mention a favorable genetic makeup or lack of family history. Only about one in one hundred women are aware that pregnancy is related to a reduced risk of gynecologic cancer.

Women are similarly uneducated about the symptoms associated with gynecologic cancers (see figure 6, next page). Forty-seven percent cannot name any symptoms. Twenty-three percent

Risk Level For Developing Gynecologic Cancer

Do you feel you are at risk of developing a gynecologic cancer in your lifetime?

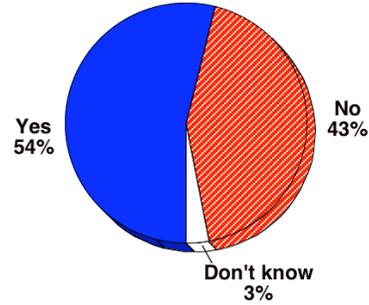


Fig. 3

Factors Increasing Risk

Are you aware of any factors that increase the risk of developing a gynecologic cancer?

	First Mentions	Total Mentions
No, not aware of any	45	60
Heredity/genetics/family history	20	29
Smoking	9	15
Exposure to certain viruses/STDs	6	13
Multiple sex partners	5	6
Obesity	2	6
Hormones	2	4
Diet/Foods we eat	1	4
Birth control pills	1	3
Endometriosis	1	1
Other cancers	*	2
Infertility	*	1
Unsafe sex	*	1
Tamoxifen	*	*
Other	7	25
Don't remember	1	4

Fig. 4

Factors Decreasing Risk

Are you aware of any factors that decrease the risk of developing a gynecologic cancer?

	First Mentions	Total Mentions
No, not aware of any	57	72
Healthy lifestyle/diet	12	19
Regular check-ups	7	11
Pap smears	6	11
Birth control pills	2	4
Heredity/genetics/lack of family history	2	4
Condoms	1	3
Pregnancy	*	1
Other	11	23
Don't remember	1	3

Fig. 5

mention abnormal bleeding, followed by pelvic pain (9%), vaginal discharge (3%), and bloating (2%). One percent reports that there are no symptoms.

Women are uncertain of what type of specialist they would see if they were diagnosed with a gynecologic cancer. Forty-one percent think they would need to see a gynecologist, while 31% believe they would need to see an oncologist. Just 11% mention that they would see a gynecologic oncologist. Thirteen percent do not know what type of specialist they should see.

Awareness of Gynecologic Cancer Symptoms

Can you name any symptoms of gynecologic cancers?

	First Mentions	Total Mentions
No, don't know	47	47
Abnormal bleeding	23	31
Pelvic pain	9	20
Vaginal discharge	3	9
Bloating	2	5
There are no symptoms	1	1
Painful intercourse	*	4
Other	13	25

Fig. 6

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

When asked about sources other than their doctors, a majority of women say they would turn to the Internet for more information about gynecologic cancers (see figure 7). The Internet is mentioned by 51%, more than three times as much as the next most frequent response, other health professionals (15%). Other sources include a cancer society, institute, or center (6%), personal relationships (4%), and medical publications or hospitals (3% each).

Gynecologic Cancer Source of Information

Other than your doctor, where would you go for more info about gynecologic cancers? And what other sources of information would you rely on?

	First Mentions	Total Mentions
Internet	51	66
Other health professionals	15	25
Cancer society, institute, or center	6	6
Family and friends	4	12
Medical publications	3	24
Hospitals	3	3
Women's magazines	1	4
Talk shows	-	1
Other	7	29
Don't know	12	12

Fig. 7

RESEARCH TO IMPROVE WOMEN'S HEALTH IS VERY IMPORTANT

Nearly all women say it is important for the U.S. to invest in research designed to improve the health of women (see figure 8), and 81% say this is *very* important. Furthermore, 98% feel it is important for the nation to invest in research to prevent, treat, and potentially cure gynecologic cancers (see figure 9), and 78% feel this investment is *very* important.

Importance of Women's Health Research

How important do you think it is for the U.S. to invest in research designed to improve the health of women?

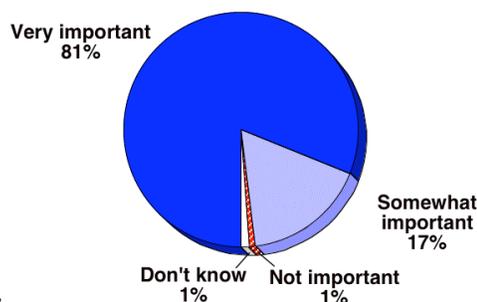


Fig. 8

Importance of Gynecologic Cancer Research

How important do you think it is for the US to invest in research to prevent, treat and potentially cure gynecologic cancers?

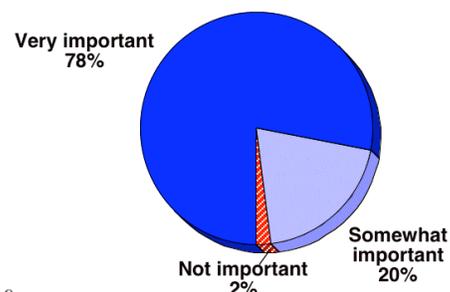


Fig. 9

METHODOLOGY

Research!America and the Gynecologic Cancer Foundation commissioned the Charlton Research Company to conduct a telephone survey in July 2005 among 800 adult women nationwide, using random-digit dialing methodology. To a 95% confidence level, a sample size of 800 yields a theoretical margin of error of $\pm 3.5\%$. Please note that much of the question text in this report has been paraphrased. Please note that percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding. Complete poll findings are available at www.researchamerica.org.

Research!America is a not-for-profit, membership-supported national alliance of organizations and individuals dedicated to enhancing public education and advocacy for medical, health, and scientific research. For more information about poll, or for other questions about public attitudes towards scientific research, contact Research!America at: 1101 King Street, Suite 520, Alexandria, Virginia 22314 · Telephone: 703/739-2577 · Fax: 703/739-2372 · e-mail: info@researchamerica.org · www.researchamerica.org.

The Gynecologic Cancer Foundation was founded by the Society of Gynecologic Oncologists in 1991 to help inform and educate women about gynecologic cancers in order to help prevent these diseases over time. Through its activities and programs, GCF works to ensure public awareness of gynecologic cancer prevention, and the need for early diagnosis and proper treatment of gynecologic cancers. In addition, GCF supports research and training related to gynecologic cancers. For more information contact: The Gynecologic Cancer Foundation 230 West Monroe, Suite 2528, Chicago, IL 60606. Telephone: 312/578-1439, Fax 312/578-9769, e-mail: info@thegcf.org, Web site: www.thegcf.org.

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