

GEM General practice Evidence for Modern day practice

GEMs offer brief updates from general practice research tackling the challenges of front-line practice.

The diagnostic performance of CA125 for the detection of ovarian and non-ovarian cancer in primary care: A population-based cohort study

Dr Garth Funston

The clinical problem tackled by this research

NICE recommends CA125 as a first line test for women presenting with possible ovarian cancer. This study evaluated the accuracy of CA125 testing in primary care. In addition, the authors sought to develop models to provide the probability of cancer based on a woman's CA125 level and age.

What this research tells us about the problem

- In women tested for CA125 in primary care prior to an ovarian cancer diagnosis, levels were usually abnormal (≥35U/ml): CA125 was abnormal in 77% of women with ovarian cancer and in 85% with aggressive 'invasive' ovarian cancer. CA125 was more accurate in women ≥50 years.
- 10% of women with an abnormal CA125 test were diagnosed with ovarian cancer.
- 12% of those with an abnormal test but no ovarian cancer, were diagnosed with another type of cancer e.g. lung, bowel and pancreatic.

The research team (*GPs)

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Suggested WISE Action

- 1. Check CA125 in women presenting with symptoms of suspected ovarian cancer and if CA125 is high, consider other cancers such as pancreatic, lung and gastrointestinal as differential diagnoses when taking a history and examining the patient.
- 2. Advise patients referred on an urgent suspected ovarian cancer pathway due to a high CA125, to seek further review if ovarian cancer is ruled out, to help ensure other potential cancers are not missed.

Note that simple models which provide the estimated probability of ovarian cancer based on a woman's CA125 level and age have been developed, to guide decisions on the need for urgent specialist investigation. These are being validated and will soon be available to GPs.

Where you can read more about this work

Journal Article: <u>https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1003295#abstract0</u> Lay blog: <u>https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/2020/10/28/an-existing-blood-test-for-ovarian-cancer-has-been-re-evaluated/</u>

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