



An Open Letter to the Payer Community

May 18, 2009

To whom it may concern,

The Ovarian Cancer National Alliance is a survivor-led, national umbrella organization that was established in 1997 with the goal of uniting ovarian cancer survivors and their families, women's health advocates, health care providers, researchers and the general public in the battle against ovarian cancer. Our mission is to conquer ovarian cancer by uniting individuals and organizations in a national movement.

In the United States this year, approximately 22,000 women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer and the vast majority of them will be diagnosed in late stages of the disease. Unfortunately, the five year survival rates for ovarian cancer have not significantly increased in the last 30 years, and less than 50 percent of women will live five years from diagnosis. The majority of patients with advanced disease will undergo chemotherapy, and while the response rates for primary treatment are fairly high, more than 70 percent of women will have at least one recurrence of her ovarian cancer. Once a patient recurs, there are many choices of chemotherapy drugs, however response rates are typically below 50%. Regardless of response, all of these women, will incur the side effects of chemotherapy. Additionally, with each round, the probability of finding a responsive drug decreases due to acquired drug resistance.

Increasingly, new tools are becoming available to individualize and optimize treatment decisions. These include chemosensitivity and resistance tests or drug response markers that individualize cancer care by providing a decision support tool. These test results help physicians, in consultation with their patients, to select the most effective chemotherapy regimen for each patient. We believe it is important for patients and doctors to have access to tools that improve quality and efficacy of treatment, thereby increasing a patient's probability of survival and quality of life.

We are asking you to ensure that the decision to use these drug response markers stays with the oncologist. Most physicians that treat gynecologic cancers have used these types of tests in the treatment of their patients. Furthermore, Medicare currently covers these tests. It seems only reasonable and principled that patients have access to technologies that assist the oncologist in personalizing cancer treatments. We encourage you to provide coverage of chemosensitivity and resistance tests for all gynecologic cancers.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Karen Orloff Kaplan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Karen Orloff Kaplan, MPH, ScD
Chief Executive Officer