

YourHealthNews

January - February 2016

Screening for ovarian cancer may help reduce deaths

Ovarian cancer is considered to be an uncommon cancer ranking only as 17th amongst cancers in women.

However, it is the fifth leading cause of death in females behind lung, breast, colorectal and pancreatic cancers. Medical breakthroughs in ovarian cancer management have progressed in the past few decades, but the prognosis for

patients diagnose with this condition is still relatively poor. The reason for this is that most cases are diagnosed late, approximately 60% have disease spread to other organs at the time of diagnosis. Hence, ovarian screening programs have been an important research aspect

to enable early diagnosis and management of patients, especially when early diagnosis, where

Common symptoms associated with ovarian cancer:

- ***Pain over the abdomen or pelvis***
- ***Urinary symptoms such as urinary frequency***
- ***Feeling full***
- ***Persistent abdominal bloating or increasing abdominal girth***

malignant tumor is localized, accounts for more than 90% of the 5-year survival rates.

A recent randomized controlled trial¹ conducted in the UK with more than 200 000 women volunteering determined that ovarian screening could reduce deaths if screening is

done compared to no screening at all. It further showed that a blood examination together with a scan is a better choice than a scan alone. The results of this study is groundbreaking as it may open doors for early diagnosis at a localized level of ovarian cancers, which can result in early management. Eventually, patients will have a better chance of survival.

Although results are promising, cost implications of having a screening for ovarian cancer needs to be further studied and debated.

Overall, research on ovarian cancer should be

encourage by both government and non-government organizations. Women, on the other hand, must discussed their general health with their practitioners, and to always seek medical help when needed.

More damage is seen in chronic alcoholic drinkers that also binge drink

Consumption of alcohol to dangerous levels is a global public health issue that needs to be addressed. Harmful effects of alcohol consumption in excess has been implicated in a number of diseases including liver cirrhosis, pancreatitis, some cancers and cardiovascular diseases. Not to mention that drinking alcohol on unsafe levels can lead to various secondary acute injuries, vehicular or occupational accidents, and even death.



It is known that heavy intake of alcohol by chronic alcoholic beverage drinkers increases the likelihood of liver injury. However, damage to the liver has not been fully understood that much, until recently, when a team of investigators from the US demonstrated the molecular damage of chronic alcohol followed by repeated binge administration in their 4-weeks study conducted in mice.²

In their investigation, the mice showed metabolic changes in the

liver where it resulted to fat accumulation in the liver cells. Other than this, it also revealed that the liver has also increased susceptibility to stress, and decreased ability to fight it, instigating more injury to the organ.

This experimental study on mice can affirm the importance of taking alcohol in moderation and abiding to the recommended alcohol intake to prevent accelerated liver injury amongst alcoholic beverage drinkers. Patients who are chronic alcoholic are advised to consult with their physicians for proper management. Support groups are also helpful for those wanting to moderate their alcohol intake.

Get help for your excessive alcohol intake. Consult with your physicians.

Dementia drug shows potential in improving symptoms in Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurologic disease that results in uncontrollable movements of the body. Approximately 1% of more than 60 years of age have the condition.

One of the debilitating symptom of this illness is having unstable gait that results in falls. Around 70% of patients with Parkinson's disease have at least one fall per year; while a third can have recurrent falls. Most of these falls often result in injuries, fractures and hospitalizations. It is, therefore, important for patients with Parkinson's disease that their balance is improved to have a better quality of life.

In the latest breakthrough in Parkinson's disease management, a group of researchers from the UK³ have found that a common drug for dementia improves symptom of gait instability in patients with the

condition. This drug, known as rivastigmine, showed remarkable results when compared to placebo in a randomized, controlled trial. With improvement in balance, patients might be able to reduce the frequency of their fall; and consequently, lessen undesirable possible outcomes of the fall.

It has also be noted during the trial that there were mild side effects related to rivastigmine use, which makes it more convincing for possible usage in these group of patients.

With this promising results, people with Parkinson's disease may soon have a drug that can help improve their balance and possibly reduce the likelihood of a fall.

Common symptoms of Parkinson's Disease

- **Unintentional tremor or shaking**
- **Muscle rigidity or stiffness**
- **Slowed movements**
- **Shuffling gait or problems with balance/unsteadiness**

IBS is associated with low vitamin D, study shows

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a recurring, chronic gastrointestinal condition, which is common worldwide. It is often diagnosed clinically with manifestations of long-standing, recurring stomach pains with diarrhea or constipation or alternating stool consistency. Often a criteria, called Rome III Criteria, is used to assist in diagnosing IBS.

Although, the exact cause of IBS is still uncertain, it is believed that it is multifactorial, which includes hypersensitivity of the bowels, intestinal dysmotility, intestinal lining inflammation and stress.

Recently, University of Sheffield researchers have found that more than 70% of IBS patients have low levels of vitamin D.³ Even though, the pilot study did not show improvement in symptoms, which may be due to the low number of participants, it showed that supplementing with vitamin D improves the quality of life of sufferers compared to those who were on placebo. Patients with IBS are predisposed to having depression, and it has been believed that the latter is also associated with low vitamin D levels. This may explain the improve quality of life of IBS sufferers in this study.

Generally, this encouraging results may of benefit to many IBS patients. It gives opportunity for patients' vitamin D levels to be checked, and possible supplementation when levels are low.



References:

1. Jacobs IJ, Menon U, Ryan A, Gentry-Maharaj A, Burnell M et.al. Ovarian cancer screening and mortality in the UK Collaborative Trial of Ovarian Cancer Screening (UKCTOCS): A randomized controlled trial. *Lancet*. 2015. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)01224-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)01224-6)
2. Shukla SD, Aroor AR, Restrepo R, Kharbanda KK and Ibdah JA. In vivo acute on chronic ethanol effects in Liver: A mouse model exhibiting exacerbated injury, altered metabolic and epigenetic responses. *Biomolecules*. 2015. 5:3280-3294.
3. Henderson EJ, Lord SR, Brodie MA, Gaunt DM et.al. Rivastigmine for gait instability in patients with Parkinson's

disease (ReSPonD): A randomized, doubled-blind, placebo-controlled, phase 2 trial. *Lancet Neurol.* 2016. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1474-4422\(15\)00389-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1474-4422(15)00389-0).

4. Tazzyman S, Richards N, Trueman AR, Evan AL et.al. Vitamin D associates with improved quality of life in participants with irritable bowel syndrome: Outcomes from a pilot trial. *BMJ Open Gastro.* 2015.2:e000052. DOI:10.1136/bmjgast-2015-000052.