

Charities combine efforts on hidden cancer

Grainne Cunningham

IT is the hidden disease which will kill seven out of every 10 of its victims – and more Irish women die from it than any other nationality in Europe.

The first annual World Ovarian Cancer Day will take place on May 8, with the aim of raising awareness.

Three charities, all of which were founded in memory of someone who died from the disease, have united to promote the day and raise awareness of symptoms and available supports.

Emer Casey was just 28 and

a solicitor in Dublin when she woke up with bad abdominal pain in 2006. Within three months, she was dead.

Seven years later, her mother Juliette still finds it unbearable to relive that time.

"It was awful," she said.

Juliette is promoting the Emer Casey Foundation to fund research into ovarian cancer and provide practical care for patients, through an oncology liaison nurse at Cork University Maternity Hospital.

SOCK (Supporting Ovarian Cancer Knowledge) was set up by sufferer Jane Keating

before she died in 2011 at the age of 30. The group have ensured that ovarian-cancer information leaflets are available in GP surgeries.

Jane's sister Clare remembered her sister as "an amazing person" who "never stopped" until her death.

Symptoms

Rachel Ireland helped set up OvaCare in 2011 after the death of her mother at the age of 52. The organisation supports sufferers.

Senior scientist in Trinity College Sharon O'Toole said a key problem with ovarian

cancer is late or mistaken diagnosis and tumours which stop responding to chemotherapy.

"The tumours are getting smarter," she said.

Her team is working on developing more sensitive blood tests so that doctors do not confuse the symptoms with irritable bowel syndrome or other conditions.

If a woman experiences bloating, difficulty eating, abdominal pain and the need to urinate often on most days within a three-week period, they should discuss their concerns with their doctor.



Rachel Ireland (top), Juliette Casey and Clare Keating at the launch in Dublin. JASON CLARKE PHOTOGRAPHY

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