

ACTION

Spring 2025

OVARIAN CANCER ACTION



THE GAME-CHANGERS WE NEED

ORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY IMPACT

Welcome to the latest edition of **Action Magazine**, where bold ideas, pioneering research, and incredible women take centre stage.

Every breakthrough is built on years of dedication, daring thinking, and collaboration. Progress in science is never easy. It's powered by people – scientists, supporters, and the women who take part in research and help push boundaries.

Thank you for powering change

Inside these pages, you'll meet some of the remarkable people making change happen. People like Nick, who walked the entire coastline of England in memory of his wife, Lisa, raising over £60,000. Or Professor Ahmed and the women shaping the future of ovarian cancer prevention through the **OvarianVax** project. Or the hundreds who joined **Walk in Her Name** to stand with women facing ovarian cancer today.

What unites them? Action. Determination. Their will to change the future.

Every story in this magazine exists because of people like you. You fund the research. You join the trials. You raise your voices. You are the game-changers making progress inevitable.

So thank you for all that you do. With your support, we can change what the future looks like.



A VACCINE REVOLUTION

What if we could stop ovarian cancer before it even starts?

Ovarian cancer is often diagnosed too late. With no reliable screening test, prevention could be a game-changer. That's the goal of OvarianVax – a potential vaccine designed to stop ovarian cancer before it even begins.

Vaccines have already revolutionised cancer prevention. The HPV vaccine has dramatically reduced cervical cancer cases, and a similar approach is showing promise in testicular cancer.

At the University of Oxford, Professor Ahmed Ahmed and his team are developing OvarianVax – a vaccine designed to help the immune system recognise and attack ovarian cancer cells before they take hold.

If successful, OvarianVax could be life-changing. Initially, the focus will be on women with BRCA gene mutations, who face a significantly higher risk of ovarian cancer. Many choose preventative surgery, removing their ovaries before 35, to reduce their risk. This vaccine could offer a safer, non-surgical alternative. **But the long-term goal is broader. If proven effective, OvarianVax could one day become a routine vaccine for all women.**

Inside the research that could change everything

For the last decade, Professor Ahmed and his team have tackled ovarian cancer from two angles: understanding how it begins and harnessing the immune system to fight it.

Initially, they focused on early detection, but alongside this, they explored how immunotherapy could stop the disease before it starts. Then they asked: what if these two areas of research could be combined? Instead of waiting to detect ovarian cancer, could the immune system be trained to eliminate it before it grows? **This idea became OvarianVax – a vaccine designed to target ovarian cancer at its earliest stage.**

This is how it might work. OvarianVax is designed to target tumour-associated antigens (proteins found on the surface of these cells), so the immune system can recognise and eliminate them.

By exposing the immune system to these antigens, scientists hope to 'train' the body to detect and destroy cancer cells before they have the chance to grow into tumours.



What's next?

OvarianVax is still in the early stages of development, but progress is being made. Since 2014, Ovarian Cancer Action has supported Professor Ahmed's discoveries, ensuring this vital research continues. Thanks to this long-term investment – and the generosity of supporters – OvarianVax has now received a £600,000 grant from Cancer Research UK to advance pre-clinical research, the crucial next step before clinical trials.

Progress doesn't happen on its own. It's powered by long-term investment and belief in bold ideas. With continued support, OvarianVax could lead the way to a future where fewer women ever face ovarian cancer at all.



Cary Wakefield

Cary Wakefield
Chief Executive
Ovarian Cancer Action

WOMEN PAVING THE WAY TO PROGRESS

Scientific progress doesn't happen in isolation. It takes researchers, supporters, and women like Jo and Sbba – turning their own experience into lasting impact.

The Ovarian Cancer Action **Research Network** is a nationwide, virtual group of individuals affected by ovarian cancer who use their experiences to shape future research.

Anyone affected by ovarian cancer can join, helping to ensure studies focus on what truly matters to patients.

The women you'll meet here are all part of this network. Jo and Sbba offered their insights, experiences and perspectives to help shape the OvarianVax research – knowing it wouldn't benefit them personally, but hoping it could protect others.

Women who refuse to give up

The patient involvement group behind **OvarianVax** shared one powerful belief: the future can be different.

They all had already been diagnosed with ovarian cancer, meaning a preventative vaccine wouldn't help them – but they chose to take part anyway. They gave their time, experiences, and voices to help guide the research – ensuring it reflects the real needs and priorities of women affected by ovarian cancer.

Some of these women are no longer with us. Their absence is deeply felt, but their impact lives on.

“This project is more than just science. It's about honouring the women who dedicated their precious time to research and to the hope that no woman will face ovarian cancer in the future.” – Professor Ahmed

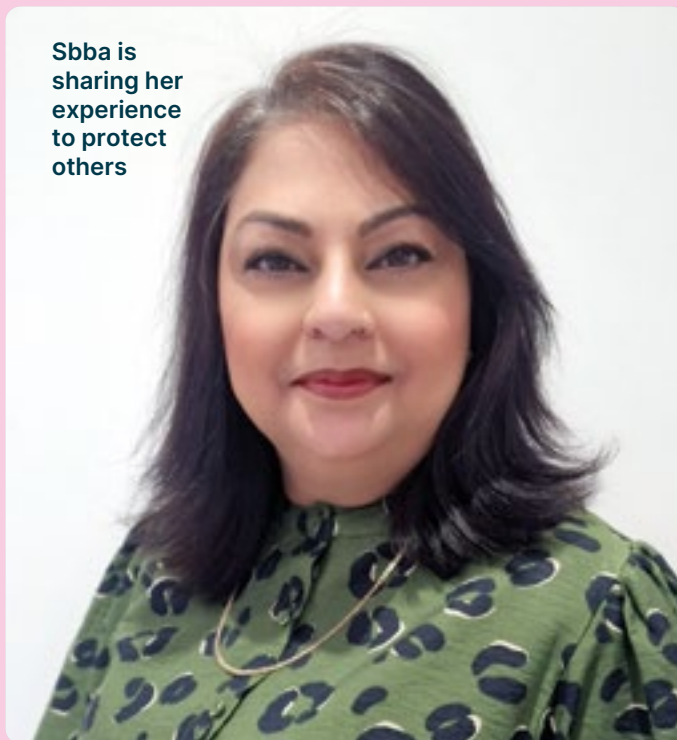
Professor Ahmed has spent over a decade dedicated to this research, with continuous support from Ovarian Cancer Action.

From the very start, we believed in his vision and backed him when the project was still just an ambitious idea. Today, that belief has brought us to an exciting moment – one where a potential vaccine might be taking shape.

Sbba: standing up for change

For Sbba, 55, from Berkshire, the journey to her ovarian cancer diagnosis was fraught with challenges. For six long and stressful months, her symptoms were dismissed as menopause.

Sbba is sharing her experience to protect others



“I wanted to be part of this so other women wouldn't have to experience what I did. A vaccine would be a game-changer.” – Sbba

When she was finally diagnosed and able to begin treatment, chemotherapy left her with debilitating side effects – including permanent nerve damage, chronic pain, and severe rashes.

Yet, despite everything, Sbba remains a powerful advocate. Sbba chose to participate in OvarianVax and continues to support women through the Ovarian Cancer Action's **Research Network**. Sbba's participation wasn't just about science – it was about ensuring that every voice, especially those from underrepresented communities, was heard.

“Cancer does not discriminate. So I wanted to ensure minority voices were represented.” – Sbba

Jo: grateful and hopeful

When Jo, 67, from South Oxfordshire, felt something wasn't right, her GP listened.

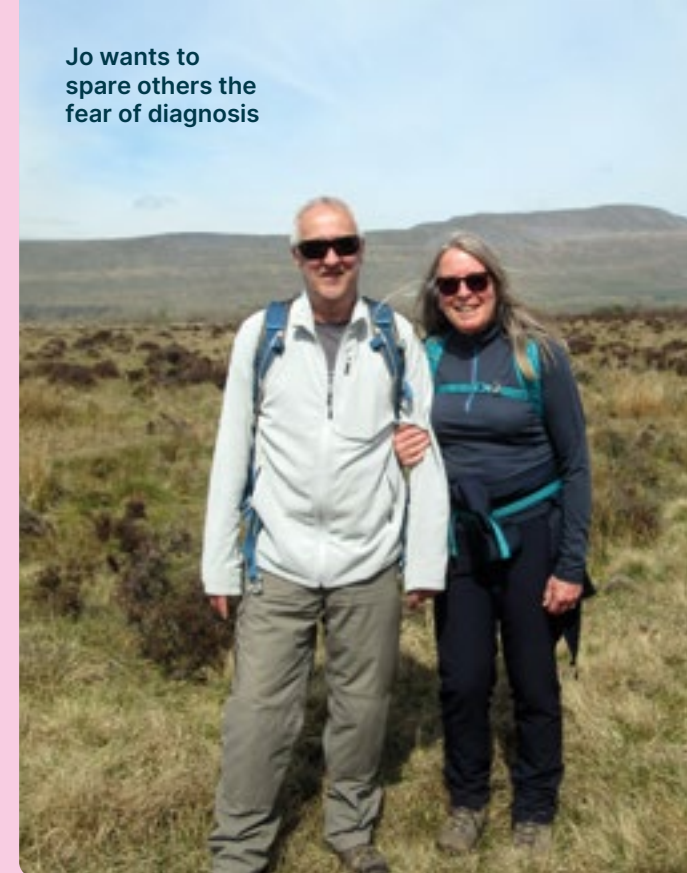
That early intervention meant she was diagnosed with stage 2a mucinous ovarian cancer while treatment was still highly effective. Catching cancer early made all the difference, giving her the chance for successful treatment and remission.

But Jo continues to advocate for research, hoping she can spare others from the fear and uncertainty of diagnosis.

“I was fortunate my cancer was caught early, but too many women are not. That's why I joined the Research Network – because early prevention could save lives. I'm optimistic that one day this vaccine will be available to all.” – Jo

The dedication of women like Jo and Sbba – and those no longer with us – is shaping a future where fewer women will face ovarian cancer. Their voices are changing the direction of research. With every new person who joins the **Research Network**, a future where all women survive, grows closer.

Jo wants to spare others the fear of diagnosis



WILL YOU HELP US SHAPE FUTURE RESEARCH?

Anyone affected by ovarian cancer can join the Ovarian Cancer Action **Research Network**, helping to ensure studies focus on what truly matters to patients. Members help research that is in its early stages, before clinical trials. They review research proposals, collaborate with scientists, and funding decisions – all from the comfort of their homes.

To find out more about joining please visit ovarian.org.uk/researchnetwork



LISA'S LEGACY: ONE MAN, HIS DOG, AND 3,000 MILES

Last year, Nick Johnson and his dog Louis, set off on a mission – to walk the entire English coastline in memory of Nick's late wife, Lisa.

This epic adventure would take them through challenging landscapes, battling tough weather conditions and exhaustion. But their determination never wavered, and along the way, they made countless new friends and inspired people across the country.

162 days and thousands of miles later, they would reach their finish line.

They have now raised more than £60,000 (and still counting) for ovarian cancer research.

Reflecting on the incredible support he received, Nick said:

"Lisa enriched the lives of those around her, radiating warmth and kindness with a huge smile. If able, Lisa would thank you for supporting this adventure, as I try to make ovarian cancer a survivable disease for all women."



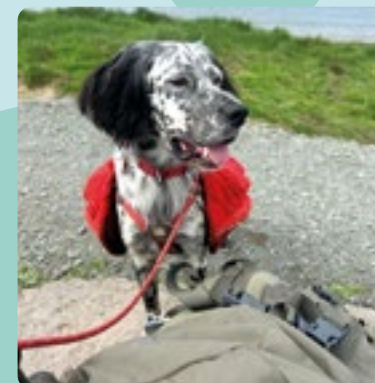
DAY 38: ILFRACOMBE

"Big climbs today! Over 15 miles ahead. It's going to be a mission, but at least the weather's on our side. Louis will earn his dinner tonight... though if anyone's got a spare sausage on the way, he won't say no!"



DAY 65: CARLISLE

"Well, I suppose it was bound to happen! Caught my foot on a tree root and went flying. A&E reckons I've got a fractured radius – whether it needs a cast or just a sling, we're pressing on. Might need a few volunteers to walk Louis and carry the rucksack over Hadrian's Wall."



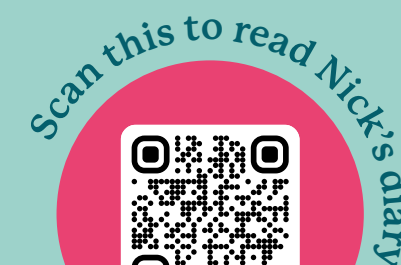
DAY 3: LULWORTH COVE

"Drizzle, detours, and mud today. Chapman's Pool was closed, so we had to find another way... Louis wasn't convinced it was the quickest!"



DAY 68: NEWCASTLE

"Resting up in Newcastle for the weekend. Louis, ever the attention seeker, was more than happy about the fuss from a visiting hen party at the pub. Cheers, ladies!"



DAY 1: HIGHCLIFFE

"A warm welcome at Highcliffe Castle today. Huge thanks to everyone following our journey and for all your support and donations already."

HAS NICK INSPIRED YOU?

Nick's amazing journey is just one of many. There are thousands of you who walk, run, cycle, bake and quiz to help fund more vital research.

Join this incredible community today: ovarian.org.uk/fundraise



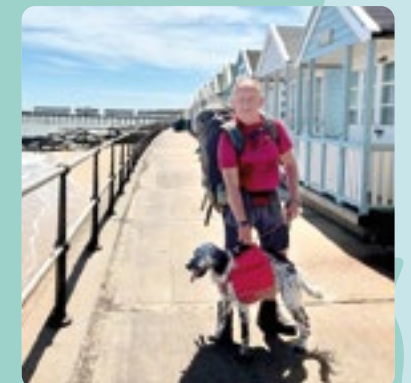
DAY 89: SKEGNESS

"Today we are walking the Lincolnshire coast. Louis has been looking forward to this county due to the particular sausage making skills of this region."



DAY 162: OCA RESEARCH CENTRE

"That's a wrap – many thanks for Cary, Iain McNeish and all at Ovarian Cancer Action for the warm welcome and kind words to celebrate myself and Louis completing our coastline adventure. Thank you to all that kept us motivated with your encouragement, kind words and generous donations."



DAY 114: CANVEY ISLAND

"We've been covering some big miles lately. Louis is flat out on the bed after a good meal – he's left me a bit of space, but judging by his face, he's not moving anytime soon!"

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF RESEARCH



Every four years, the brightest minds in ovarian cancer research unite with one goal: to drive the next breakthrough.

For nearly 40 years, Ovarian Cancer Action has hosted the Helene Harris Memorial Trust (HHMT) International Forum on Ovarian Cancer. **This is a world-leading event that brings top scientists, doctors, and experts together to push the boundaries of research.**

Breakthroughs don't happen in isolation. They happen when brilliant minds share ideas, challenge each other, and spark new discoveries. That's exactly what HHMT is about – tackling the biggest questions in ovarian cancer and planting the seeds for the next life-saving innovation.

Over the years this forum has helped drive real change – from getting the symptoms of ovarian cancer officially recognised, to shaping NHS guidelines on diagnosis and care, and even helping to agree how the disease is described and staged worldwide.

“By bringing researchers together, we accelerate progress. One conversation, one idea, can lead to the next big discovery.”

– Marie-Clare Platt, Head of Research, Ovarian Cancer Action

In October 2024, Ovarian Cancer Action proudly funded and hosted the latest HHMT, bringing together some of the most respected scientists in the field to shape the future of ovarian cancer research.

By creating a space for collaboration and bold ideas, HHMT leads to real-world impact for women affected by ovarian cancer.



1989



TODAY

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON?



EARLY DETECTION AND NEW TREATMENTS

On World Ovarian Cancer Day, a global **\$1 million research grant** will be launched – a first-of-its-kind collaboration between ovarian cancer charities in the UK, USA, Canada, and Australia.

Together, these organisations – including Ovarian Cancer Action – are funding an ambitious AI-driven project focused on one of the biggest challenges raised at HHMT: early detection and new treatments for ovarian cancer.

CHECK YOUR SYMPTOMS

Too often, ovarian cancer symptoms go unnoticed or misdiagnosed. Ovarian Cancer Action's new digital symptoms checker is designed to change that.

This new, easy-to-use online tool helps people recognise the signs of ovarian cancer earlier – turning awareness into action. It's powered by innovative technology, and now we need your help to make it even better.

Help shape this life-saving tool

You know how critical early diagnosis is. Now you can be part of building something that could help save lives. How to help:

- **Try it:** visit ovarian.org.uk/symptoms-checker and check your symptoms
- **Send us feedback:** Let us know what you think at digital@ovarian.org.uk

Check your symptoms:



Follow us to keep up to date with the latest news and updates. Search **@ovariancanceraction** on Facebook and Instagram.

BEYOND THE FORUM

In the coming months, researchers from the 2024 HHMT Forum will publish a paper in a globally renowned journal, sharing key insights and outlining where future breakthroughs are most likely to come. Read by scientists and clinicians worldwide, this publication will help **shape the next wave of ovarian cancer research.**

WALKING HEROES

This March, during Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, more than 1,200 of you came together to Walk in Her Name, including Captain and Lioness Beth Mead. Each person set out to walk 100km over the month – and together, you raised almost £200,000 to date to fund life-saving research.

To everyone who took part in Walk in Her Name 2025, your determination and passion blew us away. Thanks to you, we're one step closer to a future where no woman dies from ovarian cancer.



"I know it's not been easy, but the money you've raised is going to hopefully save a lot of lives and I'm very proud of everything you've all done."

Beth Mead, Walk in Her Name
Captain and Lioness



"Privileged and humbled to be a part of something with women who are quite clearly amazing... we've got this!"

Pam, Hartlepool



"This challenge has made a huge difference to my recovery since finishing chemo. I'm so glad I found OCA. I've raised £3k since Dec and will keep doing what I can."

Mirinda, Hawarden



"So proud to be part of this supporting group. Walking in the name of those we love is always going to be a wonderful thing. Thank you for all of the support we've given each other."

Josephine, Bedford

**FANCY A
CHALLENGE
THIS AUTUMN?**

Register your interest at
ovarian.org.uk/autumn-challenge



THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO

At Ovarian Cancer Action, we're determined to reshape what the future looks like for all women – and your support can help us get there.

We urgently need more treatments, better prevention and care, and quicker diagnosis. We need it for all the women in our lives.

To donate now, go to
ovarian.org.uk/fundthefuture

OVARIAN CANCER ACTION

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