

# Ovarian Cancer Symptom Awareness

On November 4, 2012, Ovarian Cancer Symptom Awareness (OCSA) launched an innovative new awareness program at the 130th Annual Illinois State Veterinary Medical Association Convention in Lombard, Illinois. The OCSA Veterinary Outreach Program (VOP) mission is *fighting ovarian cancer with animal passion* and seeks to engage and collaborate with the veterinary community members who have immediate access to individuals already inclined to discuss health issues in their presence. The program will focus on raising awareness about the often-missed symptoms of ovarian cancer. In addition, co-founder Rick Roman announced a new veterinary medicine scholarship program that will award three \$5,000 scholarships beginning in 2013.

Approximately 400 members of ISVMA attended the luncheon and when asked for a show of hands to illustrate how many in the audience had been affected by ovarian cancer, everyone was amazed to see a hand or multiple hands raised at almost every table. Several attendees came up to the program speakers after the luncheon to share their own experiences. Ovarian cancer can affect ALL of us.

## Why Veterinarians

The veterinary medical profession is charged with promoting and protecting public health, ensuring an environment free from animal-borne diseases, hazards and more in addition to caring for the animals they serve. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), more than 80 percent of veterinarians graduating today are female. This increases the possibility of a personal connection to the disease and a viable tie to the purpose of this program. Ovarian cancer is not just a woman's disease. Everyone in the family is affected when a woman is diagnosed with the disease, and men can carry the gene and pass it along to their children. The OCSA VOP's goal is to raise awareness through veterinarians and, ultimately, their clients about the silent symptoms of ovarian cancer.

OCSA, ISVMA and AVMA have invested talent, time and money to develop this strategic messaging and education concept. This is an actionable program that we all believe in, AND the ISVMA

and AVMA are fully supporting the effort. OCSA is dedicated to educating these professionals, going so far as to establish an on-going educational scholarship in the name of the organization's dear co-founder, Susan M. Roman, who lost her life to the disease in March 2012.

The VOP makes it possible to educate veterinarians in both urban and rural areas about ovarian cancer, its symptoms, and ways to address potential client concerns. The first veterinary practice to introduce this program in January 2013 will be Gateway Veterinary Clinic in St. Charles, Illinois.

In order to successfully begin "fighting ovarian cancer with animal passion," OCSA and ISVMA will be looking for veterinary practices interested in properly expanding this program throughout the state, nationwide and, ultimately, worldwide! For more information, please visit [www.ovariancancersymptomawareness.org](http://www.ovariancancersymptomawareness.org). 🐾

CH Khalin – OCSA ambassador and service animal

