Title

Reproductive factors do not influence survival with ovarian cancer

Authors

Phung, Minh Tung
Alimujiang, Aliya
Berchuck, Andrew
et al.

Reproductive Factors Do Not Influence Survival with Ovarian Cancer

Minh Tung Phung[1], Aliya Alimujiang[1], Andrew Berchuck[2], Hoda Anton-Culver[3], Joellen M. Schildkraut[4], Elisa V. Bandera[5], Jenny Chang-Claude[6,7], Anne Chase[8], Jennifer Anne Doherty[9], Bronwyn Grout[8], Marc T. Goodman[10,11], Gillian E. Hanley[12], Alice W. Lee[13], Cindy McKinnon Deurloo[8], Usha Menon[14], Francesmary Modugno[15,16,17], Paul D.P. Pharoah[18,19], Malcolm C. Pike[20,21], Jean Richardson[8,20], Harvey A. Risch[22], Weiva Sieh[23,24], Kathryn L. Terry[25,26]; for the Multidisciplinary Ovarian Cancer Outcomes Group and the Ovarian Cancer Association Consortium, Penelope M. Webb[27]; for the Australian Ovarian Cancer Study Group, the Multidisciplinary Ovarian Cancer Outcomes Group and the Ovarian Cancer Association Consortium, Nicolas Wentzensen[28], Anna H. Wu[20], and Celeste Leigh Pearce[1]; for the Multidisciplinary Ovarian Cancer Outcomes Group and the Ovarian Cancer Association Consortium

ABSTRACT

Background: Previous studies on the association between reproductive factors and ovarian cancer survival are equivocal, possibly due to small sample sizes.

Methods: Using data on 11,175 people diagnosed with primary invasive epithelial ovarian, fallopian tube, or primary peritoneal cancer (ovarian cancer) from 16 studies in the Ovarian Cancer Association Consortium (OCAC), we examined the associations between survival and age at menarche, combined oral contraceptive use, parity, breastfeeding, age at last pregnancy, and menopausal status using Cox proportional hazard models. The models were adjusted for age at diagnosis, race/ethnicity, education level, and OCAC study and stratified on stage and histotype.

Results: During the mean follow-up of 6.34 years (SD = 4.80), 6,418 patients passed away (57.4%). There was no evidence of associations between the reproductive factors and survival among patients with ovarian cancer overall or by histotype.

Conclusions: This study found no association between reproductive factors and survival after an ovarian cancer diagnosis.

Impact: Reproductive factors are well-established risk factors for ovarian cancer, but they are not associated with survival after a diagnosis of ovarian cancer.

Introduction

Invasive epithelial ovarian cancer (ovarian cancer) has a 5-year survival rate of less than 50%. Cigarette smoking (1) and higher body mass index (2) before diagnosis are both associated with poor survival, whereas menopausal hormone therapy use is a positive prognostic indicator (3). However, the literature surrounding the association between reproductive factors and ovarian cancer survival is equivocal even though many are associated with risk of the disease. Older age at menarche has been associated with both poor (4) and longer

[1]Department of Epidemiology, University of Michigan School of Public Health, Ann Arbor, Michigan. [2]Division of Gynecologic Oncology, Duke University School of Medicine, Durham, North Carolina. [3]Department of Medicine, University of California Irvine, Irvine, California. [4]Emory University Rollins School of Public Health, Atlanta, Georgia. [5]Cancer Epidemiology and Health Outcomes, Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, New Brunswick, New Jersey. [6]Division of Cancer Epidemiology, German Cancer Research Center, Heidelberg, Germany. [7]Cancer Epidemiology Group, University Cancer Center Hamburg, University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany. [8]Patient Advocate. [9]Department of Population Health Sciences, Huntsman Cancer Institute, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. [10]Samuel Oschin Comprehensive Cancer Institute, Cancer Prevention and Genetics Program, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, California. [11]Department of Biomedical Sciences, Community and Population Health Research Institute, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles, California. [12]Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine, Vancouver, Canada. [13]Department of Public Health, California State University, Fullerton, Fullerton, California. [14]MRC Clinical Trials Unit, Institute of Clinical Trials and Methodology, UCL, London, United Kingdom. [15]Women's Cancer Research Center, Magee-Women's Research Institute and Hillman Cancer Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. [16]Division of Gynecologic Oncology, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. [17]Department of Epidemiology, University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. [18]Department of Oncology, Center for Cancer Genetic Epidemiology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

[19]Department of Public Health and Primary Care, Center for Cancer Genetic Epidemiology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom. [20]Department of Preventive Medicine, Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California. [21]Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York, New York. [22]Chronic Disease Epidemiology, Yale School of Public Health, New Haven, Connecticut. [23]Department of Population Health Science and Policy, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, New York. [24]Department of Genetics and Genomic Sciences, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, New York. [25]Department of Epidemiology, Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health, Boston, Massachusetts. [26]Obstetrics and Gynecology Epidemiology Center, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts. [27]Department of Population Health, QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. [28]Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics, National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, Maryland.

M.T. Phung and A. Alimujiang contributed equally as co-authors of this article.

Corresponding Author: Celeste Leigh Pearce, 4642 SPH Tower, 1415 Washington Heights, Ann Arbor, MI 48109. Phone: 734-764-3835; E-mail: lpearce@umich.edu

survival (5), but three other studies have found no relationship (6–8). Similarly, some (6, 7), but not all (4, 5, 8) studies have reported that parity is associated with better survival. One study reported a decreased death rate among those who used combined oral contraceptives (COC; ref. 8), but most studies did not observe an association (4–6). A major concern with these studies is power; to our knowledge, the largest published study of reproductive factors and ovarian cancer survival included 1,698 patients (4). Therefore, we have used data from 11,175 patients with ovarian cancer in the Ovarian Cancer Association Consortium (OCAC) to clarify the associations between survival and age at menarche, COC use, parity, breastfeeding, age at last pregnancy, and menopausal status.

Materials and Methods

This analysis used self-reported data from 16 studies in the OCAC, including two studies from Australia, four from Europe, and ten from the United States (US; http://ocac.ccge.medschl.cam.ac.uk/; **Table 1**). All studies obtained institutional ethics committee approval and followed recognized ethnical guidelines, including the Declaration of Helsinki, the Belmont Report, and/or the US Common Rule; and participants provided written informed consent. Participants who were diagnosed with primary invasive epithelial ovarian, fallopian tube, or primary peritoneal tumors (hereafter referred to as ovarian cancer) were included in the analysis. To be included, patients had to have been diagnosed with one of the five main histotypes (i.e., high-grade serous, endometrioid, clear cell, mucinous, and low-grade serous) and had follow-up time and vital status information available. Survival time was counted from date of diagnosis to either death or last follow-up. Follow-up is largely done via linkage with national death databases.

The six prediagnosis reproductive factors of interest were age at menarche, COC use, parity, breastfeeding, age at last pregnancy, and menopausal status. The covariates included age at diagnosis, race/

Table 1. Description of the 16 OCAC studies included in the analysis.

Study abbreviation	Study full name	Study location	Recruitment period	Data collection method	Participants	Number of deaths (%)	Mean years of follow-up (standard deviation)
AUS	Australian Ovarian Cancer Study	Australia	2001–2006	Self-completed questionnaire	1,329	947 (71.3%)	5.02 (3.44)
OPL	Ovarian Cancer Prognosis and Lifestyle Study	Australia	2012–2015	Self-completed questionnaire	793	314 (39.6%)	3.52 (1.24)
GER	German Ovarian Cancer Study	Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany	1993–1998	Self-completed questionnaire	152	100 (65.8%)	7.61 (5.82)
POL	Polish Ovarian Cancer Case–Control Study	Poland	2000–2004	In-person interview	152	82 (53.9%)	3.72 (1.97)
SEA	Study of Epidemiology and Risk Factors in Cancer Heredity	East Anglia and West Midlands, UK	1993–2013	Self-completed questionnaire	1,242	550 (44.3%)	7.31 (5.53)
UKO	United Kingdom Ovarian Cancer Population Study	United Kingdom	2006–2009	Self-completed questionnaire	631	323 (51.2%)	6.73 (4.17)
CON	Connecticut Ovary Study	Connecticut	1999–2003	In-person interview	329	180 (54.7%)	5.86 (2.92)
DOV	Diseases of the Ovary and their Evaluation	Washington	2002–2009	In-person interview	886	519 (58.6%)	7.34 (4.45)
HAW	Hawaii Ovarian Cancer Case–Control Study	Hawai'i	1994–2008	In-person interview	359	203 (56.5%)	7.86 (5.18)
HOP	Hormones and Ovarian Cancer Prediction	Western Pennsylvania, Northeast Ohio, Western New York	2003–2009	In-person interview	615	372 (60.5%)	5.29 (3.19)
NCO	North Carolina Ovarian Cancer Study	North Carolina	1999–2008	In-person interview	814	534 (65.6%)	6.15 (3.97)
NEC	New England Case Control Study	New Hampshire and Eastern Massachusetts	1992–2008	In-person interview	1,373	774 (56.4%)	5.17 (4.59)
NJO	New Jersey Ovarian Cancer Study	New Jersey	2005–2009	Telephone interview	195	118 (60.5%)	6.08 (2.95)
STA	Genetic Epidemiology of Ovarian Cancer	Greater Bay Area, CA	1997–2002	In-person interview	407	236 (58.0%)	6.55 (4.20)
UCI	University California Irvine Ovarian Study	Orange County and San Diego County, CA	1994–2004	Self-completed questionnaire	363	168 (46.3%)	7.47 (3.58)
USC	Study of Lifestyle and Women's Health	Los Angeles, CA	1994–2010	In-person interview	1,535	998 (65.0%)	8.54 (6.84)
				Overall	**11,175**	**6,418 (57.4%)**	**6.34 (4.80)**

Table 2. Hazard ratios (HR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the association between each reproductive factor and survival among patients with ovarian cancer overall and by histotype.

Reproductive factors	All women 11,175 cases HR[a] (95% CI)	P	High-grade serous 6,582 cases HR[b] (95% CI)	P	Endometrioid 1,898 cases HR[b] (95% CI)	P	Clear cell 1,013 cases HR[b] (95% CI)	P	Mucinous 923 cases HR[b] (95% CI)	P	Low-grade serous 759 cases HR[b] (95% CI)	P
Age at menarche (years)												
<12	1.00 (0.94–1.07)	0.99	1.02 (0.95–1.10)	0.57	0.91 (0.74–1.12)	0.39	0.98 (0.75–1.29)	0.89	0.80 (0.56–1.15)	0.22	1.09 (0.82–1.46)	0.54
12–14	1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00	
15+	1.02 (0.94–1.10)	0.65	1.02 (0.93–1.11)	0.72	0.93 (0.72–1.21)	0.60	1.14 (0.80–1.63)	0.47	0.92 (0.62–1.36)	0.68	1.40 (0.99–1.97)	0.05
	P_{trend} = 0.63		P_{trend} = 0.83		P_{trend} = 0.72		P_{trend} = 0.53		P_{trend} = 0.50		P_{trend} = 0.41	
Combined oral contraceptive use duration (years)												
<1	1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00	
1–4.99	0.96 (0.90–1.03)	0.25	0.97 (0.90–1.05)	0.45	0.95 (0.76–1.20)	0.69	0.87 (0.64–1.18)	0.38	0.89 (0.61–1.30)	0.54	0.99 (0.75–1.31)	0.95
5–9.99	0.98 (0.90–1.06)	0.61	1.01 (0.92–1.10)	0.88	1.04 (0.80–1.36)	0.74	0.88 (0.62–1.26)	0.49	0.70 (0.44–1.09)	0.12	0.97 (0.67–1.40)	0.86
10+	0.96 (0.88–1.05)	0.39	0.97 (0.88–1.08)	0.61	0.93 (0.69–1.27)	0.67	0.82 (0.54–1.24)	0.35	1.10 (0.72–1.69)	0.66	0.91 (0.63–1.30)	0.60
	P_{trend} = 0.29		P_{trend} = 0.72		P_{trend} = 0.84		P_{trend} = 0.26		P_{trend} = 0.76		P_{trend} = 0.62	
Parity												
0	1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00	
1	1.00 (0.91–1.11)	0.96	0.99 (0.87–1.11)	0.81	0.99 (0.72–1.36)	0.97	0.97 (0.62–1.51)	0.88	1.33 (0.79–2.21)	0.28	1.31 (0.86–1.98)	0.21
2	1.00 (0.91–1.10)	1.00	0.98 (0.88–1.10)	0.74	1.02 (0.77–1.37)	0.88	1.01 (0.65–1.57)	0.96	0.72 (0.43–1.19)	0.20	1.30 (0.85–1.99)	0.22
3+	0.98 (0.89–1.09)	0.75	0.99 (0.88–1.12)	0.93	1.02 (0.75–1.40)	0.89	0.67 (0.40–1.12)	0.12	1.09 (0.64–1.87)	0.75	0.92 (0.59–1.45)	0.73
	P_{trend} = 0.83		P_{trend} = 0.99		P_{trend} = 0.84		P_{trend} = 0.14		P_{trend} = 0.90		P_{trend} = 0.33	
Breastfeeding												
Never breastfed	1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00	
<12 months	0.95 (0.89–1.02)	0.13	0.94 (0.87–1.02)	0.13	0.94 (0.75–1.18)	0.60	1.07 (0.76–1.50)	0.71	1.04 (0.72–1.49)	0.84	0.92 (0.68–1.24)	0.57
12–23 months	1.00 (0.91–1.09)	0.95	0.96 (0.87–1.07)	0.50	1.00 (0.72–1.39)	0.99	1.09 (0.68–1.73)	0.73	1.22 (0.72–2.05)	0.46	1.23 (0.80–1.88)	0.34
24+ months	1.11 (0.99–1.24)	0.07	1.12 (0.99–1.27)	0.08	0.77 (0.49–1.19)	0.24	1.13 (0.65–1.99)	0.66	1.44 (0.83–2.48)	0.19	1.05 (0.66–1.67)	0.84
	P_{trend} = 0.37		P_{trend} = 0.41		P_{trend} = 0.38		P_{trend} = 0.60		P_{trend} = 0.18		P_{trend} = 0.60	
Age at last pregnancy (years)												
<25	1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00	
25–29	0.99 (0.91–1.07)	0.76	0.99 (0.90–1.08)	0.78	1.13 (0.88–1.45)	0.34	1.02 (0.70–1.50)	0.91	0.98 (0.65–1.48)	0.92	0.92 (0.65–1.30)	0.63
30–34	0.92 (0.85–1.00)	0.06	0.93 (0.85–1.03)	0.16	0.88 (0.67–1.16)	0.37	0.95 (0.63–1.44)	0.81	0.95 (0.63–1.42)	0.79	0.93 (0.65–1.32)	0.67
35+	0.94 (0.86–1.03)	0.17	0.97 (0.88–1.08)	0.61	0.82 (0.60–1.10)	0.19	0.88 (0.56–1.40)	0.59	0.65 (0.40–1.05)	0.08	0.92 (0.63–1.35)	0.68
	P_{trend} = 0.055		P_{trend} = 0.36		P_{trend} = 0.07		P_{trend} = 0.54		P_{trend} = 0.10		P_{trend} = 0.72	
Menopausal status												
Pre-menopausal	1.04 (0.96–1.13)	0.32	1.07 (0.97–1.18)	0.19	0.86 (0.67–1.10)	0.23	1.18 (0.85–1.65)	0.33	1.22 (0.80–1.85)	0.35	1.02 (0.70–1.50)	0.91
Post-menopausal	1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00		1.00	

[a]Cox proportional hazards model, including all reproductive factors, adjusted for age at diagnosis (continuous in years), race/ethnicity (non-Hispanic White, Hispanic White, Black, Asian, other), education level (less than high school, high school, some college, college graduate or above), OCAC study (n = 16), stratified on stage at diagnosis (local, regional, distant), and histotype (high-grade serous, endometrioid, clear cell, mucinous, and low-grade serous).

[b]Cox proportional hazards models, including all reproductive factors, adjusted for age at diagnosis (continuous in years), race/ethnicity (non-Hispanic White, Hispanic White, Black, Asian, other), education level (less than high school, high school, some college, college graduate or above), OCAC study (n = 16), stratified on stage at diagnosis (local, regional, distant).

ethnicity, education level, stage, histotype, and OCAC study. The percentage of patients missing data on any variables ranged from none for age to 5.9% for education level. Multiple imputations (*mice* package in R) were conducted to create 20 imputed datasets. All variables in the dataset with ≤70% missingness were included for imputation, including the six reproductive factors and those not used in the final models. Data were imputed separately by geographic region (i.e., Australia, Europe, and US), and OCAC study was included as a predictor in all imputation models.

Cox proportional hazards models were fit for all-cause mortality among patients with ovarian cancer overall and by histotype. All models included the six reproductive factors of interest (see above); were adjusted for age at diagnosis, race/ethnicity, education level, and OCAC study; and stratified on stage and histotype (see **Table 2** for the coding schemes). Hazard ratios (HR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) across the 20 imputed datasets were pooled using Rubin's rule to obtain a single point estimate and pooled standard error for each reproductive factor. The pooled standard error is derived from within and between imputation variances. Adjusting for cigarette smoking, menopausal hormone therapy, body mass index, and aspirin use did not change the results. Including only patients with complete information ($N = 9,422$) yielded similar results. No evidence of heterogeneity between the OCAC studies for each factor–survival association was found using standard meta-analytic techniques.

Data availability

The data generated in this study are not publicly available due to limitations imposed by the original studies in which these data were collected. The corresponding author will facilitate access through existing data request processes for the OCAC.

Results

Of the 11,175 patients with ovarian cancer included in the analysis, there were 6,418 deaths (57.4%) during an average follow-up of 6.34 years (SD = 4.80; **Table 1**). There were no statistically significant reproductive factor–survival associations among patients with ovarian cancer overall or by histotype (**Table 2**). There were two borderline significant associations with survival: breastfeeding for 24+ months (HR, 1.11; 95% CI, 0.99–1.24) and age at last pregnancy 30 to 34 years (HR, 0.92; 95% CI, 0.85–1.00, **Table 2**). However, there were no trends across the categories of these exposures suggesting that the associations were likely due to chance. Similarly, there were several borderline significant associations within each histotype, but they were likely due to chance for the same reasons (**Table 2**).

Discussion

Our study was the largest to date to investigate reproductive factors and survival among patients with ovarian cancer, and found no statistically significant associations. Our sample size of more than 11,000 patients afforded us sufficient statistical power to detect potential associations. It further enabled histotype-specific analyses, which had not been evaluated previously. Our cohort's 6-year survival of 43% is close to the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program 5-year survival of 47%, suggesting that our cohort is well-representative of patients with ovarian cancer. However, due to a large proportion of missing data for debulking status, treatment, and time to recurrence, we could not consider these factors in the analysis. Overall, our findings highlight that the prediagnosis reproductive factors included in this analysis have no significant impact on ovarian cancer

survival regardless of their effects on the risk of developing ovarian cancer.

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