

CHAPTER 130

AN ACT permanently designating the month of February as "Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month" in New Jersey.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

C.36:2-134 Findings, declarations relative to ovarian cancer.

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

a. Among women in the United States, ovarian cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer death and the eighth most common type of cancer; ovarian cancer causes more deaths than any other gynecologic cancer in the United States, yet it accounts for about 3% of all cancers in the United States;

b. According to the U.S. Cancer Statistics: 2004 Incidence and Mortality report, 20,095 women in the United States learned they had ovarian cancer in 2004, and 14,716 died from the disease;

c. For 2004, the rate in the United States of new cases of ovarian cancer was 12.5 and the mortality rate for this type of cancer was 8.8 for every 100,000 women; in New Jersey, during the same year, the rate of new cases of ovarian cancer was 13.3 and the mortality rate was 8.6 for every 100,000 women;

d. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that it is estimated that more than \$2.2 billion is spent annually on the treatment of ovarian cancer in the United States;

e. Although all women are at risk for ovarian cancer, older women are more likely to get the disease; about 90% of women who get the disease are 40 years of age or older, with most being 55 years of age or older; additionally, more than half the deaths from ovarian cancer occur in women between the ages of 55 and 74 and approximately one quarter of ovarian cancer deaths occur in women between 35 and 54 years of age;

f. When ovarian cancer is found and treated in its earliest stages, the five-year survival rate is 95%; however, most women who suffer from ovarian cancer are not diagnosed until the later stages of the cancer when the disease has spread, and the five-year survival rate for these women is 30%;

g. Early detection and treatment often mean the difference between life and death, so it is important to increase awareness of the factors that put certain women at a higher risk for the disease: increased age, having a personal history of breast cancer or a family history of breast, ovarian, uterine, colon or other gastrointestinal cancers, and bearing no children;

h. Cancer experts have advised that there is a set of health problems, including general abdominal discomfort or pain (gas, indigestion, pressure, bloating or cramps), nausea, diarrhea, constipation, frequent urination, loss of appetite, difficulty eating, feeling full after a meal, unexplained weight gain or weight loss, and abdominal bleeding from the vagina, that may be early symptoms of ovarian cancer;

i. Because these symptoms are vague and non-specific, women and their physicians often attribute them to more common conditions; by the time the cancer is diagnosed the tumor has often spread beyond the ovaries, making the disease one of the deadliest forms of cancer;

j. Although the development of a screening test to detect ovarian cancer remains a very active area of research, currently there are no definitive prevention strategies to help combat the disease; consequently, having regular pelvic examinations and increasing public awareness of the risk factors and health problems that might indicate the onset of ovarian cancer may be the only ways to decrease a woman's overall risk of dying from this type of cancer; and

k. It is proper and fitting for the State of New Jersey to permanently designate the month of February as "Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month."

C.36:2-135 "Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month," February; designated.

2. The month of February is permanently designated as "Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month" in New Jersey to promote awareness among the general public and the health care community of the symptoms of ovarian cancer, the importance of early detection, and the risk factors associated with developing ovarian cancer.

C.36:2-136 Annual observance of "Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month."

3. The Governor shall annually issue a proclamation and call upon public officials, private organizations, the health care community, and all citizens of the State of New Jersey to observe "Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month" with appropriate events and activities.

4. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved October 1, 2009.