

200,000-women study concludes that ovarian cancer screening with ultrasounds or blood tests does not reduce early deaths

In the UK, 4,000 women die from ovarian cancer each year. It is not usually diagnosed until it is at a late stage and hard to treat. [The UK Collaborative Trial of Ovarian Cancer Screening] was designed to test the hypothesis that a reliable screening method that picks up ovarian cancer earlier, when treatments are more likely to be effective, could save lives.

The latest analysis looked at data from more than 200,000 women aged 50-74 at recruitment who were followed up for an average of 16 years. The women were randomly allocated to one of three groups: no screening, annual screening using an ultrasound scan, and annual multimodal screening involving a blood test followed by an ultrasound scan as a second line test.

The researchers found that, while the approach using multimodal testing succeeded in picking up cancers at an early stage, neither screening method led to a reduction in deaths.

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"UKCTOCS is the first trial to show that screening can definitely detect ovarian cancer earlier. However, this very large, rigorous trial shows clearly that screening using either of the approaches we tested did not save lives. We therefore cannot recommend ovarian cancer screening for the general population using these methods," [said Professor Usha Menon.]

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