

Innovative Approach to Ovarian Cancer Detection: Home-Based Blood Testing led by Björg Jónsdóttir

Björg Jónsdóttir, a gynecologist specializing in tumor surgery, is leading a pioneering research project focused on ovarian cancer. Originally from Iceland, Jónsdóttir moved to Sweden ten years ago during her specialist training in gynecology. After completing her training and becoming a specialist in gynecology, she developed a keen interest in gynecological cancers, which led her to a groundbreaking project investigating ovarian cancer through home-based blood sampling.

Jónsdóttir's research journey began two years ago when she completed her PhD with a dissertation on gynecological cancer and tumor spread, specifically focusing on ovarian cancer. Although she initially planned to be solely a clinician, her experiences with patients made her realize the crucial role of research in advancing medical practices. Now, she finds satisfaction in balancing both clinical work and research, which she sees as a perfect combination.

Her current research, supported by the Lena Wäppling Foundation, explores a more effective way to detect ovarian cancer relapses. The disease is often diagnosed at a late stage, and even after successful treatment, there is a high likelihood of relapse. Early detection of these relapses is vital, as it allows for timely surgical intervention, which can significantly improve patient outcomes.

To improve relapse detection, Jónsdóttir's project is testing a new protein panel in blood samples, which may be more accurate than the current CA-125 marker used today. One unique aspect of the study is the use of home-based blood sampling, where patients collect samples themselves using a finger-prick method. This approach reduces hospital visits, which can alleviate patient anxiety, and offers the possibility of earlier relapse detection through monthly blood tests.

If the results are promising, the next step would be to expand the study and compare this home-based method to traditional monitoring techniques. Currently, the project is in its early stages, with four patients enrolled and a goal of recruiting 100 participants from hospitals in Uppsala and Umeå.

Jónsdóttir draws her motivation from the patients she meets in her clinical practice, knowing that her research could directly benefit their lives. Her long-term hope is to improve early detection methods for ovarian cancer, thereby extending the survival rates for women with the disease.

The financial support from the Lena Wäppling Foundation has been essential, allowing her to dedicate time to the research that could have a significant impact on the future of ovarian

cancer treatment. Without this support, balancing clinical duties and research would have been much more challenging.

Jónsdóttir's work exemplifies how clinical practice and research can work hand-in-hand to push the boundaries of cancer treatment and improve patient outcomes.

Interview conducted and text written by Matilda Norlen & Louise Österberg