

Test 'could slash ovarian cancer deaths'

Scientists hopeful that fatal cases may be cut by 20%

Ross Lydall Health Editor

DEATHS from a cancer dubbed the "silent killer" could be reduced by about 20 per cent if women were screened via an annual blood test, researchers said today.

The results from the University College London study on ovarian cancer could lead to the first breakthrough in improving survival rates in 30 years.

It is the fifth deadliest women's cancer and kills 4,000 a year in Britain. Less than 30 per cent of sufferers are diagnosed at a potentially curable stage due to the absence of specific symptoms. Only 40 per cent of women survive

Menon, of UCL Women's Health, said: "Finally we have data which suggests screening may prevent ovarian cancer deaths." The illness was diagnosed in 1,282 women aged 50 to 74 taking part in the study, of whom 649 died by the time it ended last December. The screening test analysed changing levels of a blood protein called CA125.

However, experts warned that the study, published in *The Lancet*, did not provide unconditional backing for universal ovarian cancer screening of post-menopausal women. This is because of the risk of "false positives" — two in three women who underwent surgery after an abnormal screen were found

not to have ovarian cancer. The low detection rate also raised questions about the cost-effectiveness of an NHS-wide screening programme. 641 patients had to be screened to prevent one cancer death. Screening was found to be more useful in women tested for more than seven years.

The UCL team is now studying patient outcomes for three more years to gain a fuller understanding of the benefits. Athena Lammimos of cancer charity The Eve Appeal said: "These results don't necessarily signal the introduction of a national screening programme, but they are an exciting step forward for early detection." @rosslydall

Legal cuts see barristers work for below minimum wage, says report



JEREMY SELWYN

Objection: barristers Rebecca Sallet, Charlotte Hole and Aska Fujita at the Old Bailey today protest against cuts to legal aid rates

below the minimum wage. It warned this would make it harder for female barristers, who work fewer hours than men on average, to pursue a career in the criminal Bar and deter those from poorer backgrounds.

Sam Mercer, the Bar Council's head of diversity, said bright recruits would be put off and the "diversity of the junior criminal Bar will suffer". The Ministry of Justice said Justice Secretary Michael Gove had responded to concerns by scrapping proposed further cuts to barristers' criminal legal aid fees. @martinbentham

now received the equivalent of an average £28,000 salary, with the most junior often working for daily pay

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ex-paras win Bloody Sunday court battle

SEVEN ex-paratroopers who face questioning over the 1972 Bloody Sunday shootings in Londonderry, when 14 demonstrators died, have won their High Court battle against being detained and transferred to Northern Ireland. They claimed their lives would be in danger, and will now be interviewed by police on the mainland.

£300 fine for balloon burst internet prankster

AN INTERNET 'prankster' has been fined more than £300 for popping an archway of balloons at a university event. Shayan Shayegani, 22, known as Speedo Shy, admitted criminal damage at Kiddees magistrates' court. He had posted a video of the prank at Huddersfield University.

Sports minister: Fury must be a role model

TYSON FURY "should remember he is a role model" if the public vote him Sports Personality Of The Year, sports minister Tracey Crouch said today. More than 430,000 people have petitioned for the boxer, 27, to be taken off the BBC shortlist amid claims of homophobia and sexism.