

Serum tumour marker tests in secondary care to help diagnose suspected ovarian cancer (provisional title)

The level of serum tumour marker CA125 is used in both primary and secondary care to inform decisions about whether to refer a person with suspected ovarian cancer. In secondary care CA125 levels are used, along with ultrasound scans, to help determine if a person should be referred to a specialist multidisciplinary team for further assessment and treatment. The use of alternative or additional serum tumour markers, such as HE4, in secondary care may aid decisions about whether such a referral to a specialist multidisciplinary team is necessary.

Reducing the number of people with ovarian cancer who are not referred for further specialist care has the potential to prevent delays in confirming diagnosis and initiating treatment. Patient survival rates are higher when ovarian cancer is diagnosed at an earlier stage, therefore earlier detection has the potential to improve patient outcomes. Conversely, more accurate recognition of people referred to secondary care with suspected ovarian cancer who do not have the condition has the potential to reduce inappropriate referrals for further assessment and treatment, and the costs and anxiety that this can cause.

The NICE diagnostics assessment programme will assess the clinical and cost-effectiveness of using serum tumour marker tests to help diagnose suspected ovarian cancer in secondary care in order to make recommendations on their use in the NHS.