CNN Anchor Christiane Amanpour Announces Ovarian Cancer Diagnosis

The diagnosis spurred the television icon to emphasize the importance of early detection when it comes to ovarian cancer.

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Renowned CNN journalist Christiane Amanpour, the television network's chief international anchor, has been diagnosed with ovarian cancer, she revealed on Monday during the opening moments of her evening news show, Amanpour and Company. Describing the experience as a "bit of a roller coaster," the British-Iranian journalist spent only a minute or so on the topic before turning her attention to the subject matter that has defined her career: international tension and conflict.

"So that's my news," she said. "Now let's get to the news."

One of the most respected and recognizable reporters in the world, Amanpour has covered everything from the Bosnian War to the newly minted Biden-Harris administration and interviewed everyone from Meryl Streep to Moamar Gadhafi. She began her career at CNN as an entry-level assistant in 1983 and worked her way up to her current position over the course of the ensuing decades. In the process, she won numerous prestigious awards, including 11 News and Documentary Emmy Awards, four Peabody Awards and two George Polk Awards, according to PBS. The station airs her show in the United States.

While Amanpour said she decided to discuss her diagnosis publicly in the interest of transparency—she had been absent from her show for four weeks prior to her appearance on Monday, according to The New York Times—she also said she hoped her frankness would inspire women "to educate themselves on this disease, to get all the regular screenings and scans that you can, to always listen to your bodies and, of course, to ensure that your legitimate medical concerns are not dismissed or diminished." In a shout-out to the United Kingdom's National Health Service, she added that she also felt "fortunate to have health insurance through work and incredible doctors who are treating me in a country underpinned by, of course, the brilliant NHS."

Ovarian cancer is one of the most common gynecologic cancers; it is also one of the deadliest. Notoriously hard to catch early, it kills an estimated 14,100 women in the United States annually, according to the American Cancer Society. Tests and screenings for the disease are seldom administered to women without symptoms, though regular pelvic exams can be beneficial, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In her remarks, Amanpour acknowledged the disease's prevalence, stating that it affects "millions of women around the world."

"I've had successful major surgery to remove it, and I'm now undergoing several months of chemotherapy for the very best possible long-term prognosis, and I'm confident," she said, expressing optimism about her own chances of survival.

While Amanpour did not provide many further details about her diagnosis, women who have ovarian cancer may experience "fatigue, back pain, bloating, pelvic or abdominal pain, changes in a woman's period, and [feeling a need to urinate with] increased urgency or frequency," says Elizabeth Swisher, MD, the coleader of the Stand Up To Cancer-Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance-National Ovarian Cancer Coalition Ovarian Cancer Dream Team. The Dream Team was funded through a collaboration between Stand Up To Cancer, the Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance and the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition.

"If someone is experiencing these symptoms persistently, it is important they inform their primary care doctor or gynecologist. It's important for women to educate themselves and vigilantly monitor for these symptoms so ovarian cancer can be diagnosed and treated as early as possible," Swisher adds.

One of the biggest risk factors for ovarian cancer is a family history of the disease. In fact, a full "20% of ovarian cancers are hereditary and potentially preventable," Swisher says. Recent advents in genetic testing may facilitate prevention, she says.

Despite the health scare, Amanpour, 63, does not anticipate a total hiatus from her show in the coming months. Per CNN, she plans to continue hosting it Monday through Wednesdays for the foreseeable future.

For a comprehensive overview of ovarian cancer risks, diagnosis and treatment, see "Ovarian Cancer Basics." And to learn about medications that can indirectly reduce your ovarian cancer risk, read "Women Taking Statins Have Lower Ovarian Cancer Death Rate" and "On Birth Control? Your Ovarian and Endometrial Cancer Risk Is Probably Reduced."

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