Anna Kovtun

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Kharkiv, Ukraine

Diagnosed With Hepatitis C in 2011

I am a 34-year-old Ukrainian. I found out that I had hepatitis C virus (HCV) when I was pregnant in 2011. It was a shock. I probably was infected at the dental office because of the careless handling of tools.

Unlike hepatitis A and B, which doctors are very familiar with, I was amazed to learn that many doctors here know little or nothing about hepatitis C. In 2011, the state could not offer me any treatment other than maintenance therapy with medicine to protect my liver. Later, I learned about a treatment regimen using pegylated interferon with ribavirin. At about $15,000, the treatment was expensive and had a high probability of side effects. Therefore, I did nothing and tried not to think about it while I waited.

The state program for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis in Ukraine emerged in 2013. Thanks to state wholesale purchases, the cost of treatment decreased to a third of the price, up to $5,000 per course. However, the treatment was still not available to me. Despite the existence of the state program, until recently there was no official registry of patients with hepatitis C in Ukraine. It was impossible to understand the program and to figure out where to apply and how long to wait in order to receive therapy. The doctors did not want to put me on the registry.

In 2016, my mother told me about a drug available in Egypt that could cure hep C. This gave me hope. I began to study this disease on the internet. That same year, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued new recommendations for interferon-free HCV treatment using direct-acting antivirals. However, even now in the Ukraine, treatment methods are outdated.

In the spring of 2018, I learned about the availability of generic Sovaldi (sofosbuvir) and Daklinza (daclatasvir), produced in Egypt. I decide to treat myself without my doctors' participation or state aid. I knew my HCV genotype and had a blood test to determine the fibrosis stage of my liver. Guided by WHO recommendations, I understood that the course of treatment using sofosbuvir (MPI Viropack) and daclatasvir (Daklanork) should be 12 weeks in my case. Friends bought the medicine for me in Egypt for a total of $200 for 12 weeks of treatment.

As I write this, there are 10 days left until the end of the course. The qualitative HCV viral load

result of the blood test using polymerase chain reaction is currently negative. This gives me hope for a complete cure.

Assuming I receive a sustained virological response at 12 and 24 weeks after the end of the course of therapy, then I can safely exhale.

What three adjectives best describe you?

Broad brow, steady, sensitive person.

What is your greatest achievement?

Self-acceptance.

What keeps you up at night?

Bad dreams.

If you could change one thing about living with viral hepatitis, what would it be?

Public sentiment.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Everything passes. This too shall pass.

What drives you to do what you do?

Life.

What is your motto?

Life is what happens to you today.

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?

Sensible shoes.

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