Petra Hoffmann

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Surrey, British Columbia

Diagnosed With Hep C in 2008

My journey with hepatitis C is both heartwarming and torrid. After six years of having classic symptoms, I didn't discover that I had this life-threatening illness until 2008. After the initial shock wore off, I researched the disease daily. When one is given a life-threatening diagnosis, one has two options: Curl up into a ball and let it eat you, or get up and "slay that dragon!" It took another two years before I was treated, in 2010. I am blessed and grateful that I am one of the few people cured with the old peginterferon and ribavirin.

However, those old treatments left many scars and other medical problems (eight to be exact). I also battled and cured cancer, as have many of you. In additional to liver cancer, viral hepatitis has been linked to other types of cancer [e.g., kidney, lymphoma, bile duct, pancreas, anus, and skin], so if hepatitis C were eradicated, cancer risk would also be lowered.

When I first started to do the research and realized how bad the stigma was, I became really angry. The more I researched, the angrier I got. The stigma motivated me to shout from rooftops about awareness and education. It was the first time in my life that I knew why God had given me such a big mouth.

After my diagnosis, a colleague and I formed a support group. However, I was too sick to continue it while on treatment. In 2011, I started a charity dedicated to sharing education and awareness worldwide. The official registration date for the Hepatitis C Global Initiatives happens to be 11/11/11, the very same day that my first autobiography, 11 Vials, was released! I will never forget the day I opened the mail from Ottawa and saw the date. I cried like a baby. That date is precious to me.

Despite the fact that I have run many businesses, running this charity has been the hardest thing I have ever done. It has cost me blood, sweat, tears, my own money—and many more tears. Many times, I almost gave up. I truly believe that my guides and angels prevented me from giving up or giving away the charity. Each and every day now, I receive more clarity as to why I needed to hang on.

In 2010, I began writing monthly articles about my own journey with hep C. This consequently led to a "Dear Petra" hepatitis C advice column, which I have been running for more than two years

now. Our most recent and exciting breakthrough was the gift of a live TV broadcast platform. This incredible platform allowed us to create an open Q&A support group for all people suffering with hepatitis C and their caregivers, families and friends.

Although this journey has been an extremely painful one, it has brought many blessings, with many more to come.

Petra Hoffmann-RMHC-I, C.Ht

#ChangeYourThinking...Change Your World© with #Petrabilities.com

Founder/CEO of Hepatitis C Global Initiative

#TogetherWeCANDoGreatThings© with #hepcgi.com

PocketLIVE.tv Broadcaster: HepC Open Q and A Support Group

What three words best describe you?

Warrior, tenacious, unique.

What is your greatest achievement?

Everything since treatment. There is too much to list here!

What is your greatest regret?

I have no regrets.

What keeps you up at night?

Nothing anymore.

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

Treatment for all and ending stigma.

What is the best advice you ever received?

We all have potential—it's what you do with it that counts.

What person in the viral hepatitis community do you most admire?

Bill Remak.

What drives you to do what you do?

Passion.

What is your motto?

I have two: Change Your Thinking...Change Your World and Together We CAN Do Great Things.

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

My cat.

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?

A panther. They are sleek and patient.

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