René Moreno

December 7, 2018

Chicago, Illinois

Diagnosed With Hepatitis C in 2001

My name is René, and I am 55 years old. Seven years ago, I tested positive for hepatitis C virus (HCV). I likely contracted it through sexual contact or by means of numerous tattoos acquired throughout my life. I had flu-like symptoms, such as fever, cold sweats, and severe joint pain.

My doctor determined that I had genotype 1a, a common strain of hepatitis C in the United States. The good news was that there was no apparent cirrhosis or other liver damage. Patients with hep C can go for as long as 20 to 30 years before showing signs of liver damage. With my liver in relatively good condition, coupled with concerns about possible drug interactions with my medications for depression, I decided to hold off on pursuing HCV treatment.

I am responsible for my own actions. I know that I've made some decisions that had serious consequences, but I've also made the decision to take charge of my situation and do what I need to do to stay healthy. Eventually, I decided to seek treatment for my HCV through the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago. I was treated with Harvoni (ledipasvir 90 milligrams/sofosbuvir 400 milligrams) for 12 weeks. My HCV viral load is currently undetectable, and I am free of hepatitis C.

What three adjectives best describe you?

Compassionate, generous and diligent.

What is your greatest achievement?

Becoming a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division, 2-208.

What is your greatest regret?

Not being able to commit to love.

What keeps you up at night?

Toxic shame.

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

Busy thinking of dying instead of living.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Never try to change someone. Never try to figure people out because you won’t. A soul mate comes once in a lifetime and if you’re lucky, twice!

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

Myself because I never give up. I don’t take no for an answer, and, damn it, I’m a fighter!

What drives you to do what you do?

My entire support group: family, friends, medical team, case manager and Jesse Brown VA Medical Center.

What is your motto?

Never give up. Follow my lead because nothing comes easy. Everything has a price even death.

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

My own ass because material things you can always replace. Death is final.

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

An eagle. I like to soar in the air and be connected to the universe.

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