12 Feb 2016: My day of reckoning

My treatment ended three months ago. I have had my final blood test. There were no fireworks to mark the occasion, but I have achieved a Sustained Virological Response.

February 12, 2016 By David Pieper

So this is how it ends, not with a bang, but with a whimper.

Six month ago I started treatment with a combination of Direct Acting Antiviral Drugs which had been reported favourably in treating people with hepatitis C. The drugs had been found safe for use in Australia, but were not available other than through trials and compassionate access. Australia was some way behind the rest of the developed world in providing access to Direct Acting Antivirals and it was looking pretty grim.

I had been waiting since the beginning on 2015 for this particular trial to commence. I had been waiting since 2008, when my last treatment failed to clear my hep C, for another chance to put hepatitis C behind me. And collectively millions of people with hepatitis C around the world had been waiting for the revolution in treatment that was going to turn this epidemic around.

But then everything changed. A fellow Australian who was not prepared to wait for drugs that were already available in the other countries, headed to India in pursuit of a generic version of sofosbuvir. The worldwide study of people with HIV/HCV co-infection which I was a part of, commenced. And in the flash of an eye my 12 weeks on treatment was over, virtually without incident. And then the Australian Government announced that we would all have access, without any restriction based on treatment history, liver disease progression or substance use history.

I am so grateful to have had access to this treatment before others who are in a similar position, but I am even more the pleased that 2016 will be the year that so many people in Australia and elsewhere are finally cured of hepatitis C.

I have lived with hepatitis C for 14 years, having been infected via sexual transmission in 2002. I spent two years of my life on two separate attempts to get rid of the hep C using the most hideous, poisonous treatment with interferon and ribavirin. During that time I twice transmitted the virus to the person I love most in the world.

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My future blog entries will not start with a date because my days are no longer numbered. I am cured.

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