17 November 2015: Strange bedfellows

November 16, 2015 By David Pieper

It's funny the people you meet on the hep C journey. Last year I met a bloke with hep C. I liked him immediately although we didn't have much in common, other than we both had hep C. For the past year we have been on the same journey, through hope, disappointment and ultimately treatment for our hep C. We both felt the desperation for access to treatment and the intense gratitude for our good luck. We both ended up on the same drug and even finished treatment at the same time, although our circumstances were entirely different.

For the sake of this blog I'll call him Harry (that's not his name). Harry and I have come to know and appreciate each other's back story: Harry is a few years older than me and has spent 18 of the past 25 years in prison. He speaks frankly and openly about his drug use inside and outside prison and the things in his life that led him down that path. I am impressed by his intelligence and vulnerability despite living such a hard life. I've learnt a lot about why prisons are a "perfect storm" for hepatitis C and what drives a person to addiction. I feel like I have grown as person because of it. My life is quite unconventional in a different way, but I've never had even the slightest judgement from him.

The new treatment we have both been on is not hard, but the emotional roller coaster ride is no less a wild ride than it was with the interferon based treatment. It has been such a steadying effect to be able to talk to someone going through their own ride at the same time. Now we have both finished treatment, Harry has just signed up to be telephone peer support worker for other people going through treatment and is going to publish his treatment story in a magazine. We've organised to meet up for drink to mark the end of our treatment and hopefully we will be meeting up for a drink in three months' time to celebrate reaching SVR. One day we might even look back on this phase of our lives and see it as a turning point for both of us.

I certainly wouldn't be feeling as good and strong as I do today without the support of people like Harry. I wonder how many of us will look back on 2015 as the year everything changed.

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