7 December 2015: Still undetectable?

December 7, 2015 By David Pieper

The moment of truth has arrived. After three months on treatment the results of my first post-treatment blood test are in. I am anxious about the results because seven years ago I tested positive again for hep C one week after the end of my treatment. It was the lowest point in my life and I cried inconsolably in the Doctor's office.

The message from the clinic reads "Hi David, are you OK for tomorrow morning around 9am?" I read the message over and over again, trying to decide whether the informal tone is trying to prepare me for bad news. Or is it so casual because there is actually nothing to worry about? Would they actually try to prepare me if it was bad news, and if so how? Maybe I am just overthinking it...

I decide it is a good idea to take someone with me to get my results. Thankfully I have a good friend staying with me this week - someone who has seen me through both previous rounds of treatment; someone who asks about my health and listens to the answer; someone I trust.

At the clinic the nurse pops her head in and delivers the news I have been hanging out for - "All good", without me even having to ask the question. I burst into tears - all the grief and sadness that hepatitis C has brought over the past 13 years suddenly comes to a head. I cry with a mixture of relief at getting the good news, and anguish at the realisation that I am holding back a flood of emotions every day, just to get on with life. She asks if I would like a copy of the results "Yes please" I say, having learnt to read the test results after seeing so many of them. On page one it says "HCV RNA not detected" - I scan the other pages for something out of the ordinary, anything outside the normal range. There it is - "Creatinine Clearance" below the normal range (this is a measure of my kidney function). And right next to it "Not clinically significant". It turns out I needn't have worried at all.

Later on I consider posting my result on Facebook. I know that this is just the first step and I have three months to wait for my all clear. I don't want people to congratulate me for being cured when there is still the possibility of the hep C virus rebounding. I will leave the Facebook post till then, but this is a personal victory and the smile on my face says it all.

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