AASLD’s 2015 Liver Meeting

November 14, 2015 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

I’ve attended more than a few Liver Meetings in my 18 years of working in the hepatology field. In the early days, the meetings were discouraging. About the only thing to get excited about in the late 1990’s was Amgen’s launch of consensus interferon. Basically, we got excited over a hepatitis C treatment that barely raised the response rates. There was so little hope that we had to manufacture our own. People were dying, or were going to die. If we didn’t have hope, we would have burned out.

The 2002 Liver Meeting was exciting because of the launch of Schering’s (now Merck) PegIntron plus ribavirin. Roche (now Genentech) would be bringing out Pegasys plus ribavirin. Granted, these hep C treatments had lots of side effects, but with nearly a 50 percent cure rate, we were ecstatic.

HCV triple therapy was the splashy attraction at the 2011 Liver Meeting. Two three-drug regimens with high efficacy rates, and sometimes shorter treatment durations were the main event. There were lots of side effects and although people were talking about these new treatments, they were also talking about rashes and anal burning.

We’ve come a long way since then. The number of hepatitis C treatment options presented this year was unprecedented. With all-oral, direct-acting antivirals, hope is expanding. Tomorrow I will review some of latest research.

First, we need to be sure that all patients can have access to these miracle drugs. I am off to a rally to protest Gilead’s recent restrictions that prevent medication coverage for a large number of patients. I’ll post photos tomorrow, assuming I am not in jail. If you don’t hear from me, send money to my bank account #xxxxxxxoooooo.

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