Alcohol & Hepatitis C

November 17, 2014 By Kimberly Morgan Bossley

There was a very heated and controversial debate on our support group page this past weekend.

A gentleman wrote in asking if he is able to drink a few beers every so often while fighting hepatitis C. He was diagnosed stage 1 with minimal fibrosis.

I bet many of you here reading this post are fuming mad at the thought. I am guessing this is the case after witnessing what transpired after only a few moments of this man posting his question. As you can imagine the first reactions to this were, “Are you kidding me?” These were followed with angry outbursts after he said his doctor had no problem with him drinking. He was trying to plead his case and get more approval without fully understanding that those he was seeking approval from are those who are struggling everyday with hep C and the nasty side effects that accompanies a seriously damaged liver.

Most of us were strictly warned by our hepatologists that absolutely no alcohol is to be consumed ever from now on. Total abstinence from alcohol is written in many books about hep C. You have this plus the daily reminder we are sick, and our livers are not healthy. This creates a passion to warn others.

Here is the tricky part- how do we as a hep C community handle or deal with what we feel is a no-brainer question?

Do we attack and condemn him/her for even mentioning the word alcohol? Do we lash out thinking we are doing the right thing? Scaring the person straight kind of approach? Or do we guide him/her by educating them with documentation or by personal experience? Sharing the negative effects on the liver not to mention possibly keeping them from life saving treatment?

As a mission in my own personal fight with hep C (The Bonnie Morgan Foundation for HCV), I have set aside all my preconceived visions and beliefs to educate and guide others to get tested and help get cured. I have met many others with hep C who were misled, misguided, and received incorrect information from medical providers. We all like to think that all doctors and physician assistants know everything about hep c. But as a prime example, two months ago, a medical doctor shared on TV that Ebola is contracted like hepatitis C and AIDS via overexposure (which we all know is untrue). Think about those newly exposed getting this information. This misinformation came from a doctor, so they might be thinking it must be true.

You see where I am going with this now? We can’t expect doctors to know everything about every disease, virus etc. As the doctor stated on the second opinion show on hep C he explained “There are 50

different diseases we are asking our doctors to pay attention.” It truly becomes impossible to keep up with every single health issue. This is why referrals happen. But what happens if you get incorrect information and not know it? This is whole different issue that the medical care system needs to address.

It doesn’t mean they are bad doctors; it just means that there is no possible way anyone could know everything about everything. (There are some that claim to, but that’s not possible)

With that said-we as a strong hep C community need to join together and offer positive constructive education and guidance about hepatitis C, not condemning and persecuting someone who really needs our help.

Keeping in mind there is only so much we can do once we share information to help them. If the person refuses to accept advice or seek further suggestive education and chooses to drink anyway defending his/her actions, we have NO control over that. We do however, have control over how we educate and bring awareness to this disease. After all, when things are said and done, we are all fighting the same battle and looking for the cure. We are not doctors but for most of us fighting this battle we know and understand through experience. They don’t teach that in any medical school.

Get TESTED Get TREATED Get CURED!

Together WE are STRONG
"Not without a FIGHT!~HCV~(C)

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