New Hepatitis C Treatment - Week 4: Blood Work and Weight Loss

January 11, 2013 By Devon Nicholson

As expected the further into my Hep C Incivek “triple therapy” regimen I get the more negative side effects I experience, making it more difficult to go through. I want to thank all the people who have read my articles and watched my videos up to this point. The positive and motivational feedback has been extremely helpful for keeping my spirits up. I have been getting a lot useful advice from medical professionals and patients who have already gone through treatment. I greatly appreciate the encouragement. Hep C treatment can cause low blood cell counts (anemia), which leads to lack of oxygen in organs and can be dangerous enough to cause heart failure. The treatment also causes bone marrow suppression. This is the decrease in cells responsible for providing immunity, carrying oxygen and normal blood clotting. Weekly blood tests are required by my liver specialist to monitor this and other adverse effects caused by the medication I’m taking to ensure that the negative effects don’t become deadly. Above the weekly tests, I have been instructed to have blood work done at the hospital laboratory every 2 to 4 weeks to test for the Hepatitis C virus itself. Although Hep C antibody tests can be done at regular labs they only indicate exposure to the disease. This does not mean that you have it and can be a “false positive” according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. For example most people like me who have taken the Hep A and B vaccines will test positive for those antibodies but not actually have the viruses present in their blood. On November 9th I went to the Ottawa Hospital to check if the Hepatitis virus is present in my blood for the first time since being on treatment.

If it is found I am negative for the virus it will be declared a Rapid Viral Response (RVR). This will not mean that I am cured of Hep C but would be a great sign that the medications I’m taking are working. I will only be permanently cleared if I have a Sustained Viral Response (SVR). This is a continued undetectable viral load 6 months after the completion of treatment. During my first treatment 2 years ago I had a Rapid Viral Response and my specialist was confident would be cleared of the virus. After suffering greatly through 19 weeks on the “combination treatment” of Interferon and Ribavirin the adverse effects from therapy were becoming more risky then the effects of the disease itself at the time. Some patients with RVR’s have been reported to have a Sustained Viral Response after stopping therapy after only 12 weeks. I was advised it likely would not affect the results if I stopped at 19 weeks or continued for the last 5. My 6 months post treatment appointment was July 13th 2010. I’ll never forget that day as it was undoubtedly the worst day of my life. I walked into the specialist’s office with a huge smile on my face in great shape physically as I had fully recovered from treatment and was training harder than ever. As I thought I’d be cleared of the virus I had signed a 3 fight Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) contract and was to have my first fight August 20th. I remember not thinking anything of the psychologist I’d been seeing through treatment being in his office and was telling her with enthusiasm all of my future plans.

The specialist then walked in and dropped the bombshell. The Hep C had relapsed and I had been

through the torture of treatment for nothing. The deadly disease was back and my life was in danger. This destroyed me. On top of that I could not get licenced to fight MMA or even attempt another shot at my dream of wrestling in the WWE which was the career path I had been training for all my life. I sincerely hope that this treatment works and I’m not going through this hell for no reason. This is my biggest fear in life. Until next time the battle rages on.

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