Born With Hepatitis C

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November 13, 2020 By Greg Jefferys

Today in my Facebook Hep C Support group a new member, who recently learned that he had hep C, mentioned that he also discovered that both his parents were infected with hepatitis C back in 1995 when he was born. He wondered if he could have caught Hep C when he was born and if he had had hep C since birth.

Question…I am 35 years old, just diagnosed with hep C, recently found out from my father that my mother had hep C before I was born, is there a chance that I contracted it from her that long ago and went unnoticed until now?

The overwhelming response from group members was that it was very likely.

The statistics are that about 5% of babies born to Hep C infected mothers will catch hep C during the birth process, NOT during pregnancy but during the birth process when there is lots of blood around and a small scratch on the baby will allow infection.

And remember in 1985 no-one knew that hep C existed. Hep C was not discovered until the end of 1989.

Transmission of hep C virus from the mother to the unborn child

Transmission of Hep C from a HCV infected mother to the fetus is uncommon. Such transmission of Hep C can not happen during pregnancy, while the fetus is in the womb. Hep C transmission to the baby can happen at birth.

The risk of hep C transmission to the baby at birth is about 5%.

Born with hep C: A survivor's story

By coincidence last week I received an email from a lady in the USA who had obtained hep C treatment through me last year. She also was born with hep C, so before I go on with this I will share her email.

Dear Greg,

I have finally received my 'all clear' status from my doctor.

My liver enzymes look better than I can ever remember them looking, and my Hep C markers are all listed as Undetectable. Such a beautiful word…Undetectable.

I am so happy and hopeful for the future.

How can I thank you enough??

When I emailed you, you immediately responded. ou said yes, at every turn, and made each step simple and swift.

It always takes months to get in to see the infectious disease specialist where I live. It seemed like I should really run my plan to get the medicine from you by him. But then the pandemic hit. My gut reaction was to DO IT NOW. And I'm so glad I listened to my gut, and to you.

By the time my doctor was finally able to see me (by Zoom appointment), I was already halfway through my 84 day regimen.

He was surprised to hear what I was doing, about where I'd gotten my medicine, but he was not negative. He told me to wait till I finished taking the medicine plus 90 more days, to get ANY blood work

done.
If it hadn't been for the pandemic, I would have ignored him and would have gotten it after the 84 days just to put my mind at ease that something was happening.
But with the pandemic brewing, it seemed prudent to stay home. I was so nervous by the time I finally got the blood work back online, that I had to spend hours working up the courage. And yet it had worked. Undetectable.
I've probably had hep c since a blood transfusion at birth. So this virus has been with me for a very long time. To be free of it, to feel the peace of knowing it's gone…as you know, that's immeasurable. I found out I had it about 16 years ago when I was doing tests to figure out why I was so unwell. I remember so clearly the sense of dread and even shame upon finding out. The stigma of this disease is powerful and I believe manufactured by a medical industry that failed to keep us safe.
How funny that for all the mistrust I've had for the pharmaceutical industry, that they are the ones that produced this cure. And you, my friend, are the angel who got it into my hands and the hands of so many people. You really are a life saver.
I am so very grateful.
On this evening here in the U.S., as I stress over the outcome of this historic election, hoping against hope to be rid of the tyrant we have in the highest office in the land, in the midst of a pandemic, I can honestly say that despite all the craziness 2020 has been good for me overall.
I can finally live knowing I'm free of this disease.
A thousand thank you's.
I hope you are happy and well.
If by some weird twist of fate you and your wife ever end up on the lovely Oregon Coast, do let me know and I'll let you stay in my airbnb room.
Though it's laughable to think you'd leave that lovely place to come to the USA for any reason.
Forever in your debt,
G###
Oregon

Children and Young People With Hep C

Over the years that I have been helping people access affordable hep C treatment, I have helped a number of young people, in their late teens and 20's and 30's, to get hep C treatment.
All these people had caught hepatitis C from their mothers during the birth process.
In almost all those cases, the hep C had not caused any noticeable damage to their livers. But knowing they were carrying a potentially fatal virus in their body was a great emotional and mental strain.
In all cases these people were cured.

Children with Hep C

The treatment of young children with hep C, that is pre-teenage children was approached very carefully by the medical world. When DAAs (direct-acting antivirals) first became available the prevailing wisdom was not to treat children because, in most cases, the virus did not do any apparent damage to children (much like with COVID 19).

However recently more children are being treated and so I will mention here that treatment with DAAs is WEIGHT BASED!

This means that the dose rate for a child must be based on their body weight.

I have been involved, as an observer, in the treatment of a number of children with hepatitis C by specialists, and generally children seem to be quite sensitive to DAAs, so getting the dose rate right is important.

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