Day 135, Insurance Woes & Glandular Swelling

June 5, 2014 By Joseph Burke

It's been a pretty tense past few days here. As you may recall, last month I had a small issue with getting my medication approved for month five of Sovladi + Ribavirin. At the last minute with only 5 days remaining of medication, the pre-authorization form was approved and month five was on it's way. This month, even more headache coming from Florida Medicaid in approval of my final month of liver treatment. A request from the insurance demanding I have lab work was noted before I could be approved for the final shipment. Being up to date on all my doctor's visits and lab work, my physician's office faxed over all the information they asked for, as I just had lab work as recent as two weeks ago. Now, the past 3 days, we've been stuck in limbo, awaiting approval, and I'm down to my final 4 days of treatment with my last pill taken on Monday. It's crunch time.

I contacted Gilead's highly spoken about Sovaldi assistance program (1-855-769-7284), "Support Path," and disclosed to them my case and within 15 minutes of gathering some patient information, they informed me their team will be contacting my insurance company, doctor's office for scripts and my pharmacy. The gentleman I spoke with at Gilead Support Path was very nice, and seemed like he had been down this road many times with other patients, so he was well versed in the matter. He told me first priority is to see what they can do to get the claim on urgent status to get the medication shipped so I don't miss a day of treatment. If no terms can be negotiated, than we said his team will request scripts for both Sovaldi and Ribavirin and handle it themselves. It's moments like this, I've come too far to turn back, and I have to do everything in my power as a patient, survivor and victim of Hepatitis C to fight and push forward.

Literally, while I was typing this blog, I just received a call from my pharmacy that my claim did get approved, but with a catch. They're only going to approve my treatment on Sovaldi 7 days at a time over the next 4 weeks. So instead of getting the Sovaldi bottle with 28 tablets, I'll get getting 7 tablets distributed every week until my therapy ends on July 7th. It sounds sketchy, and it's not exactly how I planned my last month to go, but it is what it is. At least I get to complete the final month of treatment, and can fulfill all 24 weeks of therapy. I hope by blogging my journey, this can truly help someone on their own path, and give them insight from my experiences, ups, downs, setbacks and victories. It's not perfect, but I'll take it. Ultimately, does anything go as planned anymore?

On a side note, a major side effect in the latter weeks of treatment has been these sinus related issues induced by the medication Ribavirin, not my environment. My ears feeling clogged, yellow and green mucus secretions from my nose, feeling congested and the worst tender/swollen glands in my neck. The glands tenderness is very painful, as today I'm having the 4th round of gland issues while on treatment. It hurts to eat, swallow, drink or even clear my throat. Even something as simple as blowing my nose hurts. The only thing I can do to combat that is ibuprofen (Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Typically 400mg a couple times a day tends to do the trick, but at most it reduces the pain by maybe 30-40%. At night, some cough syrup like Robitussin, which helps me go to sleep and fights pain with acetaminophen works very well. Not much I can do with this Ribavirin induced "Sinus Funk." Like I've said before, while on treatment, one has to take meds to combat the side effects of other meds. If anyone out there reading is on Ribavirin or has taken it before, I'm curious to know if you've experienced any sinus related issues, swollen glands and congestion. Also, maybe what you've done to combat these side effects from your own experience. I'd really like to know as I'm counting down the days to end of treatment, I'm almost certain I'll have another wave or two or this sinus and gland tenderness issue.

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