Depression: Hep C Treatment Side Effects and Help to Get Through It, Part 2

May 18, 2013 By Connie M. Welch

Today we continue, Depression: Hep C Treatment Side Effect and Help to Get Through It, part 2. In 2011 I became very ill and my liver enzymes began climbing along with my virus load count. My doctor discussed the new triple therapy about to be approved by the FDA and encouraged me to consider it.

It was a combination therapy of Peg Interferon, Ribavirin and a new protease inhibitor designed to target the protein in the virus cell and destroy it. This treatment offered a cure rate of 70%. A cure had never been offered before.

My doctor strongly advised I start taking an Anti-Depressant 3 weeks prior to treatment in order to get into my system before treatment begins. This time I listened, and I am so glad I did. Although the triple therapy was very difficult, this time I was not dealing with the severity of depression and its compounding side effects.

The treatment drugs are so strong they chemically make you feel depressed or overly anxious. This is not an emotional or mental issue, but a physical run off of the treatment meds. Even with taking an anti-depressant you still may feel periods of the blues, anxiety or frustration but it is still not the degree you would feel without taking the anti-depressant.If this does occur tell yourself, “this is the treatment meds making me feel this way, this is not me.” And remember to tell your loved ones this too. This helps defuse hurt or helpless feelings.

Sometimes dosage amounts may need to be adjusted or medication changed if this is not the right one for you. Make sure to communicate with your doctor and nurse how you’re feeling. Don’t give up if this needs to be adjusted. If you are already on an anti-depressant prior to beginning treatment, your doctor may monitor how you are doing and you may not need any adjustment in your medication.

It is also very important to have a good support group or someone to talk with you through this time. Encouragement and support makes a huge difference in getting through treatment. A helpful resource meets on our website every Friday, Hep C Warrior’s Friday Forum Support Group.

A great help to me personally was to focus on positive uplifting thoughts. I kept a Thankfulness journal, where I wrote a Bible verse at the top of the page and then listed ten things each day I was thankful for.

I also wrote a Bible verse out on a 3Ã5 card and concentrated on memorizing one verse per week. This along with prayer was very effective keeping my thoughts not on my circumstances but beyond them.

Christian Music also helped give me great comfort and encouragement. Using all of these aided in shifting my focus on hope instead of the side effects.

My results of triple therapy, I completed treatment and the virus went Non-Detected the first four weeks of treatment and has remained Non-Detected since.

Did the Anti-Depressants make a difference? I definitely believe so. It was part of an effective tool used to help fight against treatment side effects and help me go the distance so I could complete treatment. Several months after treatment, with my doctor’s advice I stepped down gradually from the Anti Depressant. They served their purpose and I am grateful they were available.

Can you relate to depression during treatment? Do you have a question or comment?

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