Doctors without Borders; Doctors with Biases

April 17, 2016 By Greg Jefferys

Before I go into the “important news” of the day I would like to extract some sympathy from my readers. When I arrived in Barcelona I could feel the beginning of the flu. Now it has become a full blown case of the flu.
I would like, for poetic reasons, to call it the Spanish flu but the truth is that I certainly picked it up in the London tube.
Then, last night, my wife and I decided to sit down for a meal under the shade of a grove of large trees. My wife had a sangria and I had a nice cold beer.
As we sat there, nibbling our tapas and sipping our drinks a steady rain of flower petals fell from the surrounding trees. It was quite lovely visually however it turned out that it would not be so lovely for me. These trees were plain trees and they can produce an intense allergic reaction in some people, it turned out I was one of those people and by the time we had returned to our hotel room my sinuses and eyes had swollen so much that I could not breath through my nose and I was coughing and sneezing all night. It is enough to say that I had a very unpleasant night with very little sleep.

Now I have finished complaining I will get onto the important news.
Barcelona has been an interesting experience on a lot of different level. On the more positive side I have met some wonderful people who are dedicated to improving access to affordable medicines across the world.
I met a group of people who included members of Doctors Without Borders and Drugs for Neglected Diseases and other NGO groups from around the world. These dedicated people have devoted themselves to fighting against the corporate greed, embodied by companies like Gilead, who are the source of so much suffering around the world.
One of the fantastic things I found out is that a major Egyptian pharmaceutical manufacturer has been working in conjunction with socially minded scientists in the USA to develop molecules that are as effective as Sofosbuvir and Daclatasvir but do not infringe those patents.
Apparently this has been a great success and we can expect to see a full 12 week treatment of Hep C DAA Sofosbuvir and Daclatsvir equivalents for sale for LESS than $500.
Trials have already been carried out on more than 400 people with Hep C using these drugs and the results are actually a little better than branded Sofosbuvir and Daclatasvir.

Of course the USA based drug companies will fight this by arguing that one can not trust drugs made in Third World countries. Apart from being racist, untrue and total rubbish it ignores the fact that the active ingredients for Harvoni are made in Jordan and that the tablets are made in Ireland.

On the down side there is this terrible ignorance and arrogance associated with certain members of the medical profession that is very obvious at EASL.

For example, I had, with considerable effort, arranged for a doctor attending EASL to bring encapsulated APIs of Sofosbuvir and Daclatasvir for a patient from Serbia.
Serbia has terribly harsh rules against importation of medicines for personal use.
So the plan was that this doctor would bring the Sof+ Dac and the patient would fly from Serbia and pick up the medicines here.
All was going well enough until the patients doctor, who is also at EASL, found out about the plan.
This doctor went off her nut!
She accused the fellow specialist, a highly qualified and respected expert in the field, of being grossly irresponsible and negligent, stated that the generic Sof+Dac would be dangerous etc etc.
Of course the patient, who has no other treatment options, changed their minds and flew home without the medicines.
So what has this doctor achieved?
The patient has no other treatment options, has bad cirrhosis and will probably die within a year or two.
But the doctor has saved the patient from taking generics!!!
Well done Doc.

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