Those Early Days of Hepatitis C

October 17, 2016 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Do you remember when you were first diagnosed with hepatitis C? Were you scared? Angry? Bewildered? Did you feel hopeless, like life as you knew it was forever changed? Perhaps you tried to ignore the situation, telling yourself that this was not a big deal.

I was diagnosed with hep C before the Internet was easy to use. This was a blessing since it saved me from diagnosing myself with every possible extrahepatic manifestation (diseases that are associated with hep C). As the years passed, the Internet did take over my life and my imagination. In time, I diagnosed myself with a lot of maladies that didn't happen.

Eventually, I got a job working in liver disease at Stanford Medical Center. I saw what hepatitis C really did to people who weren't as fortunate as me. That is what it took for me to stop imagining that minor things were going to become life-threatening.

Why am I telling you this? Well, mostly I am reminding myself to never forget what it was like to be scared about hepatitis C. If I forget what it was like, then I risk losing my compassion.

In due course, I learned to let go of my fear, but it was a slow process. No one leaned on me and told me to "get over" my fear. They let me be afraid, and gently empowered me with information and courage. I try to do the same for others.

So, if you are afraid because you were recently diagnosed or have concerns about hepatitis C treatment, that's OK. These are normal reactions. In the long run, fear won't serve you, and in time, it will diminish or vanish. For now, know that fear is part of the process. When you find your bravery, don't forget what it felt like in the early days. Those that will come after you, afraid and looking for reassurance will need your compassion.

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http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/blog/early-days-hepatitis-c