15 October 2015: Getting personal

October 15, 2015 By David Pieper

Yesterday I took my dog for a walk in the park. He has what has been described as a “wide range”, so as soon as he’s off the leash, he is off to the farthest corners of the park on his busy schedule of sniffing and territory marking. I usually don’t worry about him because he is never aggressive with other dogs and is not interested on other people unless I interact with them.

But yesterday he was attacked by another dog. I sprang to his defense to extricate my dog from the tussle with a dog twice his size, and then got into a loud and heated argument with the other dog owner. This drew the attention of quite a few people who were passing through the park on their way to work. One of them asked if I was OK and another congratulated me on standing up for myself.

After all I have been through with hepatitis C, I guess there is a lot of fight in me and it doesn’t take much to set it off. I have had to fight so hard to get access to interferon-free treatment I am on now. I have had to fight off the despair of two treatments that failed me and I have had to fight back the guilt of twice infecting my partner with hepatitis C. These fights have not all been loud and heated, but often quiet and contemplative or focused and strategic.

I know many people have done it much tougher than me, but I guess we have all developed a degree of resilience and fight, whether that comes from inside, from the struggle against adversity, or even from belief in higher powers. I am proud to be among people who are prepared to stand up for themselves and say “We need access to these new treatments”, “We have a right to good health care” and “We need effective prevention measures like needle and syringe programs”.

As I come to the end of my eighth week on treatment, I realise this is personal. While there are many good people fighting along-side us in clinics, in government and in the community sector, for me it is personal, and it always will be.

The views expressed above are mine alone not necessarily those of my employer

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.