How to Handle Worry and Anxiety in Post Hepatitis C Treatment

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When hepatitis C treatment is over and the long wait for post treatment testing begins, hep C patients can experience waves of worry, and anxiety around testing time. Have you ever felt like you were looking over your shoulder to make sure the Hep C giant was not coming back? If so, you're not alone.

I don't know of one Hep C patient who has not dealt with feelings of worry and anxiety in post Hep C treatment. Who would have ever thought that our viral load count and liver enzymes would become a big deal in our lives? For Hep C patients this is a huge. When you finally reach 12 weeks post treatment and hear those words, "you made it, SVR12, your cured from Hep C." Whoopee!!! You feel higher than cloud nine.

It's important to understand the Hep virus replicates in the body approximately every 6 to 7 hours, so by the time you have reached 12 weeks post treatment, if the virus was going to reoccur, this is when you would most likely see your viral load showing a significant number.

Hep C researchers have shown that once a patient has achieved SVR 12 (sustained virological response), meaning, the patient has continued to show Non-Detected for the virus 12 weeks after Hep C treatment has been completed, the patient has a less than 1% chance of the Hep C virus reoccurring.

The gold standard of post treatment testing showed if the patient had achieved an SVR 24 (24 weeks post treatment and continued to be Non-Detected for the virus) then the patient was considered cured. Many physicians continue with RNA (viral load count) testing at 24 weeks post treatment and longer. But research is now showing there is very little difference between SVR12 and SVR24.

With the variety of the new Hep C treatments available today, there is a higher cure rate than ever before. Majority of Hep C treatments have a 90 to 99% cure rate.

But when do you ever breathe a sigh of relief and no longer look over your shoulder and wonder if the Hep C giant is coming back? For me personally, it took over a year. Hep C lived with me for 20 years and I had 2 previously failed treatments (in the day prior to protease inhibitors and new treatments), my 3rd treatment combo adding a protease inhibitor helped bring me the cure.

But anxiety is anxiety. Which breeds worry, and stress which suppresses the immune system, which doesn't help recovery from Hep C treatment.

When my thoughts began to wander down the road of "what if" and fear, I learned the quicker I gave my anxiety to Christ, the better off I was. I traded my anxiety over the situation for His peace, which brings calmness in the spirit and settles anxious thoughts. This has to be an intentional step of faith.

I didn't need to look over my shoulder for the Hep C giant, because no matter what I faced, Jesus was there. He's bigger than the Hep C giant, any fear or difficult situation. He is there to help us handle whatever comes our way.

Just like David who faced Goliath, we can say with assurance, "I will fear no evil." This verse is surrounded by faith and assurance in the middle of Psalm 23:4.

I found the best way to combat fear, worry and doubt was to face it quoting several scriptures that reminded me to put my focus on Christ and just like this verse is surrounded by faith and assurance, I had to do the same. "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you." Psalm 56:3 NLT

The author of the book of Hebrews in the Bible urges us, "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJ. Did you catch the key, "looking unto Jesus."

So keeping our focus on Christ is key to handling worry and anxiety in Post Hep C Treatment.

"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7

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