Hepatitis C: Brave New World - treatment success rates

June 17, 2015 By Grace Campbell

I was part of a discussion with a few people here in Australia a few days ago about hepatitis C treatment success rates, possible drugs combos and success rates for the hard-to-treat cohort.

In the Olden Days (and by Olden I mean the Interferon Days) we had a different view on treatment success rates. A cure rate of 90%? Unheard of! Fifty percent looked good for some of us. Fifty percent were the odds I was given and I gave it a crack. It was all we had. For those of us with compromised livers, 50% was worth a try.

Now, I hear people saying that 70% is good, but is there something better round the corner? Is it worth waiting? Can they take that risk? Imagine turning down 70% and a treatment time frame of no longer than 24 weeks when interferon ruled the waves.

How amazing that the landscape for treatment should have shifted so fundamentally in such a short time. Sofosbuvir, Harvoni, Viekira Pak ... game changers the lot of them. They have changed the face of treatment forever. I hope that they are the first of many workable, do-able breakthroughs in this field.

So what is our new challenge? For people in countries where the access to these groundbreaking drugs is severely limited (ie Australia, where I live) the most important challenge is to get them! That simple. Get the drugs, take the drugs, let the drugs do their job.

How do we do this? We lobby. We raise our voices. We write letters. We use ourselves as walking billboards for how these drugs can make a difference. We talk to people. We engage people and invite them to be part of our community.

Our other challenges are ongoing and these are challenges we've had right from the start. Mitigating harm. Minimising risk. Making people aware of the virus. Building a community that assists others with this virus. Supporting testing. Getting the word out about how to stay healthy. Lobbying for better access to treatment and more spaces in clinics.

Not allowing ourselves to be treated as second class citizens.

Daring to live life as a whole and healthy human being.

For other countries, such as the USA where these new DAAs have been available for some time, no doubt the challenge will be different.

It’s a brave new world folks - buckle up!

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