4 August 2015: Going Public

August 4, 2015 By David Pieper

“We are expecting you at the clinic on Thursday 6th at 16:15. Your clinic is depending on you to attend”. The wording of the text message I have been waiting for to get started on my hep C treatment suggests I might let them down by not turning up. The reality is that I would sacrifice just about anything to make sure I can be there to get started. It is seven years since my last treatment ended. If eleven months of interferon and ribavirin and the accompanying side effects were not bad enough, I tested positive again a week after my last interferon injection, despite being undetectable all the way through treatment. As I sat in the Doctor’s office waiting to be congratulated for clearing the virus, I was in shock at the news that it was back again. I burst into tears and howled inconsolably for 20 minutes. That was my second round of treatment in 2008. My first was in 2006, also unsuccessful. I was clear all the way through treatment but the virus returned within six months.

Now that I have the appointment I am allowing myself to get a bit excited by the prospect of getting rid of this virus forever. My workmates and partner are excited for me but I am finding it a little difficult to maintain a level of excitement and still concentrate on work, home life, walking the dog and everything else I usually do, especially as deep down I am shit scared.

Both of my previous treatments took a toll on me emotionally. Both times I ended up on antidepressants and in trouble at work. Looking back on it I think this was partly because I kept it to myself. It was my dark, dirty secret and it ate me up. So I’ve also been caused to reconsider my attitude to disclosure. This time I have been open with my employer and my work mates. I am writing this blog in my own name and I’ve even announced my impending treatment on Facebook. Sure, I am now working in the Blood Borne Virus Sector in my home town, which makes things a lot easier, but so far I have been overwhelmed with messages of support from people who are close to me, as well as perfect strangers who are pleased for me. As always though, it is my partner who has my back. I know he will be there for me no matter what happens.

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