Is There an Endgame with Hep C?

January 22, 2015 By John Rickman

My doctor wanted me to have blood drawn in early January 2015 to ensure I am still hep C virus-free. This is approximately nine months after I was HCV non-detectable following 12 weeks of pegylated interferon, ribavirin, and sofosbuvir (Sovaldi). Most doctors check you at six months and one year post-treatment. My doctor wanted to check me at nine months and again three months later after a year has passed. I'm the type of person that wants to know everything is still OK so I had no problem with the nine month test. A week after my blood draw, I got the results and I am still non-detectable for the HCV virus. This was Great News, but got me to thinking. Is there an endgame to hep C? The answer is yes...and no. Allow me to explain.

Yes, I am finished with the treatment but even though I am non-detectable for the virus, I still have to "live" with hep C. You see, cured in relation to hepatitis C is *sustained virologic response* (SVR). This means that the hep C virus was non-detectable for at least 24 weeks after I finished treatment. I've been non-detectable now for almost 10 months...which is great and puts the odds of a recurrence greatly in my favor. Probably less than 1%, which are odds I'll take any day! However, some physicians feel that it's possible a trace amount of the virus could hide and begin to replicate again later. But, this would most likely take place within the first six months which is why we wait for this milestone before declaring someone as officially cured of hepatitis C. I am not saying this to discourage anyone. On the contrary, with today's cure rates at greater than 90%, we are living in exciting times.

My job now is to limit my chances of ever contracting this disease again. To do this, I need to work on two things.

1) Make sure I don't engage in behavior that can cause me to contract the disease again. This would include intravenous drug use or getting a tattoo from a shared needle, snorting cocaine from a shared straw or other delivery system, sharing razors, toothbrushes, etc. In other words, common sense people don't share anything where contaminated blood could be contracted.

2) Maintain a healthy lifestyle, which gives my body all the help it needs to keep my liver and other organs in top form. This means refraining from excessive alcohol consumption, keeping processed foods to a minimum, and eating healthier food that I prepare myself. It also includes drinking plenty of pure water, getting adequate rest, and including exercise into my daily routine.

Every month that passes lessens the chance I'll ever have to deal with hepatitis C again in relation to treatment. Yes, I feel that part of the endgame is over. The other part, refraining from detrimental behavior and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, will last the rest of my life. So that part of

the end game continues. And, you know what? I am fine with that, as it’s made me a better and more caring person.

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