Hepatitis C: Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty

June 22, 2016 By Grace Campbell

I've been in Sydney for two solid days of health stuff. Living so far from my treating hospital (around 800km return trip) means I tend to treat it as a one-stop hospital shop.

First up in the surgery sweepstakes was a gastroscopy. The news was neither seriously good nor bad there, with a deterioration since my last one 1.5 years ago, but nothing horrendous. They've popped me on a beta-blocker to see if that helps.

Next up was the pathology visit. I was a little worried they'd struggle to get blood without digging to China, as I had gone many hours without eating or drinking anything of substance, but my veins are "super-duper" according to the woman who took did the tests. Yay for my veins!

All bloods looked pretty good. My ALT was 15 (steady for months now) and the same with my AST at 23. My GGT was 21, with creatinine looking sweet at 64. Albumin levels looked good too, steady as she goes at 45. Bilirubin has been sitting placidly round 16-19 for 6 months now but mostly lounging around 18, keeping itself out of trouble. It was 19 this time, just a smidge over normal range (0-18) but the overall picture is pretty good.

My AFP numbers were rock star quality at 6.1. The normal range is 0 to 7 and when I started treatment they were in the high 70s. At SVR 12 they had dropped to 8 and at SVR24 they'd fallen again to 7.3. This latest 6.1 score is a beauty!

My platelets. Oh dear, those platelets. They are still pretty ordinary but they managed to creep up to 59 from 57. It's a meaningless increase really but you have to take your joy where you can and I choose to celebrate the fact that for the first time in 8 months they have not gone down. My INR steady at 1.4.

The next day I lined up again for an ultrasound. I haven't got the results back on that yet, but the person doing it only said what I already knew one: two cysts, portal hypertension, crappy scarred liver. I should get results in a few days.

My specialist said I really should have no fear of liver failure now. I should not decompensate from

this point. My liver is holding its own and even has some reserve (bless its stoic little livery heart). The main concern is HCC, as my liver is not regenerating like some others are. This increases my chance of getting HCC. He says I have to be absolutely vigilant about my 6 monthly scans. This is also in line with the research that came out of EASL.

So some good news, some ordinary and we await the scan results. I’m about 8 months post treatment and I feel better so that must count for something!

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