Turning a Bad Experience Into Good with Hepatitis C

November 10, 2020 By Connie M. Welch

If you have a bad experience with your doctor about Hep C, what do you do? You can turn a bad experience into good with Hep C. You need good care. You need compassion and help. You need someone with your best interests at heart.

If you've had a bad experience with a healthcare provider, this is a hard place to be in. I've been there but thankfully got out and was determined to not give up. Many years ago we went through an insurance change through my husband's employer and was told the physician I had been seeing for my Hep C was on the "new" list.

The paperwork was filled out, the new insurance year began and boom, we were hit with a big surprise. The doctor whom I had developed a trust relationship with ever since being diagnosed with Hep C was NOT on the "new" list as the insurance representative had told us. I was stunned, filled with disappointment and in tears. We called and argued our case with the insurance company but to no avail we would have to wait an entire year before we could change plans. We were left with no choice but to choose a new doctor.

We picked one from the list and made an appointment. I made sure to have copies of all my medical records so my new doctor would be well informed about my Hep C. I normally go to the doctor loaded with questions. I expect my doctor to treat me with respect, listen and answer my questions and hopefully with a caring attitude. I was not prepared for what I heard from my "new" physician.

After my physical exam, I was explaining my Hep C history, my diagnosis, genotype, test reports, treatment history and so on when he interrupted me and said, "I don't know why you are bothering with all your Hep C history when you know there is nothing that can be done anyway." (May I note this was around 2001, prior to the new treatments available today).

I had mentioned I had been under my liver specialist care and was being monitored very closely. He stopped me in mid sentence to explain, going to a specialist for my Hep C was useless. He could handle anything that needed to be addressed, but for Hep C, I might as well "accept the fact that nothing could be done."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I fought back the tears and anger I felt and told him, "I'm sorry, but I do not accept or believe there is nothing that can be done. I refuse to go home and give up." He gave me a 'whatever' look and I got up to leave. Upon checking out with the receptionist, she asked if I wanted to make my next appointment and I said, "No thank you."

I left his office and sat in my car and cried. I was so hurt and shocked. Having Hep C was already a challenge but to be treated by a physician in such an unprofessional, disrespectful manner was uncalled for. Needless to say, the only thing I was willing to "give up on" was his services as my physician.

I prayed and asked the Lord to help guide me in what I needed to do. The thought came to my mind to go to my original specialist's office. I did not have an appointment, and I was technically not under his care anymore with the current insurance snag, but I felt lead to go see him. I needed to talk to him and

his nurse and seek their recommendation for another doctor.

When I entered his office, I noticed there was no one waiting, which was very unusual. Most of the time he had a waiting room full of patients, but not today, not when I needed to see him the most. His nurse immediately came out to the waiting room and sat beside me. I could not help the tears as they rolled down my cheeks as I explained what the other doctor had said to me. She patted my arm and told me I needed to see Dr. Estes and told me to wait there a moment.

She called me back to one of the exam rooms and Dr. Estes came in. He listened attentively as I explained the whole horrible story with the insurance problem and my experience with the other doctor. He was very kind, yet very professional, but when I got to the part where the other doctor told me, “there is nothing that can be done about my Hep C and I needed to accept it,” he looked as if he was biting his tongue and he shook his head. “I am so sorry you were treated that way. I certainly do not share his opinion or practice that way.”

We talked about my need to see another doctor and what he felt I needed as far as monitoring my Hep C was concerned. I explained we were told we could not change insurance companies until the open season which was a year away. He gave me his listening ear, sound advice, respect and compassion. God had made a new way possible and guided me to speak with Dr. Estes about my dilemma and gave me an answer. I left his office feeling peaceful and appreciative for his going the extra mile for me.

Here are the lesson’s I learned:

Prior to changing insurance companies, call your doctor’s office and pharmacy and make sure they are on the plan you are looking at. If they are not on the list, ask for a recommendation.

When you have a gut feeling over something, pay attention. If you are experiencing a bad situation with your healthcare provider and you know this is not the person you need to be seeing, then by all means, change doctors. Find a way to make it happen. Don’t listen to anyone who tells you your condition with Hep C is hopeless. Turn a bad experience into a proactive experience. Never, Never, Give Up, Ever!

As a Hep C Patient, you have the right to:

*ask questions

*receive good medical advice

* copies of all your test reports

* copies of your medical records

* be treated with respect.

Medical resources are there to care take of us, they work for us, we do not work for them and you have the right to change physicians if you feel you need to.

Can you relate? What did you do?

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