Hepatitis C: (I've done all the) Dumb Things

May 13, 2015 By Grace Campbell

"*I lost my shirt, I pawned my rings*
I've done all the dumb things
I melted wax to fix my wings
I've done all the dumb things
I threw my hat into the ring
I've done all the dumb things"
- Paul Kelly

Imagine your life being defined by perhaps the most stupid mistake you've made. Now imagine there is no coming back from that mistake. *Imagine living forever with that mistake in public view.*

I was listening to a Law Report episode on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Radio National recently. It was discussing an interesting project in the US called We Are All Criminals. This is how the project leader described it:

"*One in four people in the United States has a criminal record.*

This project looks at the other 75%: those of us who have had the luxury of living without an official reminder of a past mistake. Participants in We Are All Criminals tell stories of crimes they got away with."

Those of us who live with Hepatitis C can often be described as the ones who didn't get away with it.

We get to live forever with the reminder of our biggest mistake. We are reminded of it every day when we are faced with discrimination in the work place. When people no longer are our friends. When we see people visibly recoill from us.

When we have to live with the knowledge that we've given hep c to one of our children in utero or during birth. When we are frightened to fill out health forms for fear of who will see them and what they'll do with them. When going to the dentist is even more of a nightmare than normal.

Every time we look at a request for blood tests, ultrasounds, CAT scans, referrals.

There is it writ large. **HCV. Hepatitis C**.

Imagine living with the knowledge that society will forever define you by the dumb thing you did when you were 18.

Can we reframe society’s view of us? How do we do that?

Perhaps it starts with defining ourselves.

What are we? Who are we?

We are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters, friends, lovers. Survivors, fighters, warriors. Resilient, tough, brave. Caring, compassionate, sensitive. Knock us down, we get right back up again. We have to. We are knocked down so often we become good at it.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

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