Hepatitis C: Looking Beyond the Problem

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Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything. ~ George Bernard Shaw

Years ago, my mother had a plumbing problem. She called a plumber who could not locate the clean out pipe for her sewer, and a simple problem grew in size. A few years later while house hunting, the first question she asked was, “Where is the sewer clean out pipe?” She didn’t ask about the price, the structure, the roof, or crime in the area. She had been influenced by a single plumbing event and was on guard for all future drainage problems.

We do this with our hepatitis C. For instance, a patient might report not taking a cholesterol-lowering medication because of concern that it might hurt his liver. He might have minimal damage from hepatitis C, while cholesterol is clogging his arteries. Although he has a family history of heart disease, in his mind, he wants to protect his liver and take his chances with his heart.

I understand this rationale, because I do it myself. The threat from hepatitis C feels like a bird in the hand, where a cardiac problem is a bird in the bush. However, if I really think about it, sometimes I look at hepatitis C like the way my mother looked at access to sewer pipes rather than looking at other issues with the house. I let hepatitis C dominate my thinking about my health at the expense of my health.

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