Hepatitis C: Mothers Day

May 9, 2015 By Grace Campbell

“When your mother asks, ’Do you want a piece of advice?’ it is a mere formality. It doesn’t matter if you answer yes or no. You’re going to get it anyway.”
- Erma Bombeck

My birthday and that of my mother are both quite close to Mothers Day. It’s long been a ritual for my parents to come up to stay. We spend the weekend together and go out for dinner on Saturday night. If we’re really unlucky my partner cooks something for breakfast the next day.

Of course, this year being the same as every other year (except for the fact that I’m taking more drugs than a steroid-addled gym junkie and I’m generally non-functional by the evening) they came up for our annual Mothers Day shindig. With their dog.

My mother spent a lot of today looking at my eyes. A less cynical person might think she was just looking at her daughter with love and happiness, knowing her daughter was getting a fabulous opportunity to give Hepatitis C a run for its money.

But I am not less cynical. I am more cynical. Much, much more cynical. I knew exactly what she was doing. She was checking my bilirubin levels by looking at the colour of my eyes. And she was also watching me walk around when we were out shopping to see how my haemoglobin was holding up.

My mother is (or rather was) a nurse, you see. She had all sorts of little tricks like that to surreptitiously check on our health. If she held your hand, chances were she was going for a pulse. If you went to the bathroom a few times she’d ask if you had a stomach upset. Pale skin? Anaemia. Coughing? She loved this one: perhaps just a cough. But on the other hand, depending on the type of cough it could be bronchitis, pneumonia, pleurisy, lung cancer, oesophageal cancer ... the list went on.

So once she had determined that my eye colour was okay, my weight was reasonable, I could walk up hills and I appeared to be in one piece, she thought it would be useful to look at my blood test results.

“Hmmm. So they’re keeping an eye on this glucose?”
“Yes mum.”
“And I see your bilirubin is falling - that’s good. Haemoglobin almost in normal range ... good ...”
“Yes mum.”
“This haematology here - your red blood cell indices are all over the place, is that the drugs or something else?”
“The drugs mum.”
“Okay then. Looks reasonable. Get that glucose looked at.”

“Yes mum.”

Happy Mothers Day to you and your mum!

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