Hepatitis C Musings

September 20, 2013 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Do you ever have a time in your life when events come together in a way that invites reflection? Between my recent news about the good possibility of being free of hepatitis C, and the upcoming publication of my second book, *Hepatitis C Treatment One Step at a Time*, I've been contemplating my life with hepatitis C. Here are some musings:

When I contracted hepatitis C in 1988, the virus did not have a name, let alone a treatment. There was no information, no support, and hepatitis C was largely ignored. That same year, World AIDS day was declared. With nearly 62,000 AIDS-related deaths in the U.S., HIV was still not getting the attention necessary to save lives; hepatitis C was getting much less.

Now, more Americans die from hepatitis C than from HIV, a tragedy that has been occurring annually since 2007. This is due in part because of strides in the HIV-arena, but also because hepatitis C deaths are rising. Hepatitis C is the most common blood borne virus in the United States, causing an infection that is preventable, treatable, and curable.

Hepatitis C is my life's work. In addition to having this virus, I am a nurse, author and hepatitis C advocate. I have walked with countless patients through hepatitis C treatment, helped them overcome challenges and celebrated their successes. I have been treated for hepatitis C three times. At this point, I have a 98% chance of being cured, but must wait until Thanksgiving 2013 for official results.

Here is what I know:

- Hepatitis C is a serious disease and needs to be taken seriously.
- Although it is normal to be afraid of hepatitis C, fear is not healthy. The way to fight fear is with facts and support.
- Hepatitis C is not just a liver disease. Hepatitis C patients have a higher mortality rate from other conditions, not just liver-related ones.
- Hepatitis C affects body, mind, spirit, families, and communities.
- Hepatitis C is a curable condition. Thanks to the latest treatments, approximately four out of five hepatitis C patients can spend the rest of their lives free of the disease. New treatments on the horizon will improve this success rate.

- You don’t need to be extraordinary to complete treatment. Knowing how to do it coupled with good support can make all the difference in the world.
- Hepatitis C is everyone’s problem. How you got hepatitis C is not my concern--that you got hepatitis C is.
- Hepatitis C can do a lot of damage, but nature supplied you with powerful defenses--intelligence, grit, hope and a human body that can endure much.
- I will do whatever I can to help you win the battle against hepatitis C.

Hepatitis C is a call to action. Help create a world free from hepatitis C, one step at a time.

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