Hepatitis C: To “come out” or not to “come out”

July 11, 2015 By Grace Campbell

You’ll notice this blog is written under a pseudonym. I’d like to explain why that is.

My work is in an area that has a lot of contact with people. It’s also an area where our clients can pick and choose where their support goes. And to top it off I live in a fairly small city where pretty much everyone knows everyone else. It’s in a rural environment, so you can’t walk down the main street without meeting someone you know. And being a rural environment it can be judgmental.

My hepatitis C diagnosis and current treatment is a poorly kept secret. My work colleagues know. My boss knows. My family, both close and far-away, know. My good friends know. I made a conscious decision to tell those people because I wanted something from them: support, understanding and empathy among other things. In telling them, I realise that some of them will let slip about my diagnosis. That’s the risk I took.

And yet … I am still concerned about being publicly identified as having hep C. Do I dare open that door?

The real dilemma though, is this: don’t I owe it to the hepatitis C and medical communities to stand up for others who might be following in my footsteps?

Shouldn’t I validate the bravery and courage of those members of our hep C tribe who have gone before, who have stood up and made their voices heard so that I have been able to benefit from these amazing recent breakthroughs in treatment?

Isn’t it important to speak up so the community sees people with hep C as worthy of treatment and respect?

Don’t I owe it to myself and others to try, in some small way to break down the stigma associated with this virus in my local community?

As World Hepatitis Day gets closer and closer, I too am getting closer and closer to making a decision.

I think I know which way I’m leaning, but I’ll be honest. I’m nervous.

Has anyone else grappled with this dilemma? I’d be interested to know how you came to make a decision that you are happy to live with.

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