Hepatitis C Treatment in Cuba

February 1, 2020 By Greg Jefferys

Whilst people in most “First World” countries now have access to affordable and effective hepatitis C treatment using DAAs. This is not the case for the majority of people with Hepatitis C. These are the people who live in countries where they can not access, or afford, DAA treatment. People needing hepatitis C treatment in Cuba can only be treated with Interferon and ribavirin, which is now a treatment from the Dark Ages of hepatitis C treatment.

Below is a story shared by one person from Cuba that follows his journey through the nightmare of FOUR interferon treatments in Cuba.

Hepatitis C in Cuba: A Survivor’s Story

My name is Luis Ponce Rebollido a citizen of the Republic of Cuba. I live in the province of Cienfuegos and am a graduate of psychology and currently work in a drug distribution company. In Cuba people infected with hepatitis C have a very difficult time. I would like here to share my journey to find a hepatitis C treatment in Cuba and how this led me to meet a man in Australia and a new friend in Argentina who have combined to help me lift the curse of hepatitis C.

My hepatitis C journey began in 1987, as a young man taking the step forward in life and trying to set a good example I started making plasma donations in the provincial blood bank of my province in Cuba.

How I Caught Hepatitis C

After the donation of plasma in the month of November 1987 I began feel to feel some dizziness and a lot of fatigue, when I go to the doctor I am treated as being infected with a viral hepatitis, not A and not B.

After three months I receive confirmation of this diagnosis by a Cuban hepatitis specialist doctor and also told that my liver values were altered in a bad way.

I was told I had to have a liver biopsy. Unfortunately, the liver biopsy resulted in an inflammatory infection of the periportal. I have since learned that liver biopsies can be dangerous.

So for many years, like so many hepatitis C patients in Cuba, I was without treatment just sick all the time until 2010 when I went through some procedures when I was being treated at Hospital

Hermanos Almejeira in Havana. At this time I was tested for blood tests and another liver biopsy. These tests confirmed that I was infected with HCV.

Four Interferon Treatments

And so begins hepatitis C treatment with Interferon and ribavirin which was suspended at 12 weeks for not being able to lower the values of TGP and TGO.

In 2012, I started once again with interferon and ribavirin, stabilizing the TGP and TGO values during the 48 weeks, but 3 months after the end of this treatment the liver values were raised so that I repeated this toxic treatment for 2 more times.

These interferon and ribavirin treatments were performed as follows, ribavirin 3 times a day and the interferon 1 ampule alternate days. Then at 28 days the treatment was suspended one week and blood tests are performed to see complementary values.

My reactions to the Interferon treatment were extreme.

Adverse were intolerant because they cause fevers, lack of appetites, insomnia, hair loss, decay, as well as skin irritation and depression.

In 2017 I was scheduled again to perform another treatment, this time with pegylated interferon and ribavirin for 48 weeks without neutralizing the virus.

The pegylated interferon was once a week and the effects of fever were for up to 3 days. Another period of Hell for my poor body.

So I endured four separate interferon treatments. The last one in 2017 was when everyone knew that DAAs were available around the world but in Cuba people with hepatitis C could not access DAAs because of the various embargoes against Cuba.

To make matters worse at the end of 2018 I went to the Gastroenterology Institute in Havana and there I was informed that since the suspension of the interferon treatment for the first time back in 2012 I should not have done the remaining 4 treatments because my hepatitis C virus did not react to it. So all these terrible days and nights were of no use and I had only managed to survive the side effects of the interferon treatment.

I was followed up every 3 and 6 months until the year.

In the Doctor’s Waiting Room

In December, while in the waiting room of the doctor, waiting for my regular hepatitis C consultation, a patient sitting next to me tells me about this wonderful Facebook group called

Hepatitis C Treatment Cure and Community and immediately I connect and start to inform myself and check pages finding the address of Greg Jefferys who has kindly helped me.

After contacting Greg I learned that he has sent hepatitis C treatment to Cuba many times. But, unfortunately, we discovered that (because of Cuba's foreign currency rules) unless I have some relatives in the USA who would help me, there is no way I can send even the small payment needed to get my hepatitis C medicines, for all the hepatitis C medicines that Greg had sent to Cuba had been paid for by Cubans living in the USA.

But Greg had great sympathy for my situation and would not let me die from this virus. Eventually, he found a way to help me. A kind person in Argentina had, by a series of unusual circumstances, a spare treatment of DAAs that he wanted to donate to someone in Latin America. Greg suggested me and arranged a meeting via Facebook.

Now I wait for the arrival of the parcel that contains my hepatitis C medication, donated to me by a person from Argentina, a person I have never met. A person who will save my life and end my suffering but whose hand I will never shake.

Tratamiento de la hepatitis C en Cuba

Mi nombre es Luis Ponce Rebollido natural de la República de Cuba Provincia de Cienfuegos.

Licenciado en Psicología y actualmente trabajó en una empresa de distribución de drogas. En 1987, dando un paso adelante y practicando con el ejemplo, comencé a hacer donaciones de plasma en el Banco Provincial de Sangre de mi provincia.

En la terminal de la donación de plasma correspondiente al mes de noviembre siento mareos banales y mucha caries, cuando voy al médico me tratan como una hepatitis viral, al tercer mes los guardias me diagnostican hepatitis. pero mis valores hepáticos todavía estaban alterados, Tengo una biopsia de hígado que resulta en un infiltrado inflamatorio del periportal.

Sin tratamiento hasta 2010, a través de procedimientos recibo tratamiento en el Hospital Hermanos Almejeira en la capital del país, donde me hacen una prueba de sangre y biopsia hepática, arrojando VHC. Tto comienza con interferón y ribavirina, que se suspendió a las 12 semanas por no poder reducir los valores de TGP y TGO.

En 2012, comencé tto nuevamente con interferón y ribavirina, estabilizando los valores de TGP y TGO durante las 48 semanas, pero después de 3 meses los valores hepáticos aumentaron, por lo que repetí el tto 2 veces más. Estos tto se realizaron de la siguiente manera, la ribavirina 3 veces al día y la ampolla de interferón 1 alternan días a los 28 días, el tto pir se suspende una semana y se realizan análisis de sangre para ver valores complementarios.

Las reacciones Los adversos eran intolerantes porque causan fiebre, falta de apetito, insomnio, pérdida de cabello, caries, así como irritación y depresión de la piel.

En 2017 estoy programado para realizar tto con interferón pergilado y ribabirina durante 48

semanas sin neutralizar el virus. El interferón pergilado fue una vez por semana y los efectos de la fiebre fueron de hasta 3 días.

A finales de 2018 voy al Instituto de Gastroenterología y me informan que desde la suspensión del tto por primera vez no debería haber hecho los 4 tto restantes porque mi organismo no reaccionó, solo había logrado resistir Los efectos secundarios del tto.

Fui seguido cada 3 y 6 meses hasta el año En diciembre, en consulta, un paciente sentado a mi lado me cuenta sobre este grupo e inmediatamente me conecto y empiezo a informarme y reviso las páginas para encontrar la dirección de Greg que amablemente me ha ayudado.

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