



What Hepatitis C Treatment Used to Feel Like

April 4, 2016 By [Lucinda K. Porter RN](#)

Last Friday was my favorite non-Federal holiday – April Fools’ Day. I love to laugh, so an entire day dedicated to tomfoolery is my kind of day. I think the entire month of April should be devoted to laughter.

Recently I sent a Get Well card to my cousin, that said on the cover, “Laughter is the best medicine.” Inside it said, “Except if you have diarrhea.” That could be a bad time for a good belly laugh. But otherwise, pursuing humor is my favorite hobby.

So in a somewhat belated honor of April Fools’ Day, I found something I wrote years ago about what hepatitis C treatment used to feel like. When I facilitated a hep C support group, I collected descriptions that people used to convey what their experiences of hep C treatment was like using interferon and ribavirin. Here are a few of my favorites:

- “I just tell myself that I am in a rented body. I will upgrade it when I am done with treatment.”
- “It is like menopause, complete with irritability and hot flashes. I love watching men on treatment. I hope it gives them sympathy for perimenopausal women.”
- “It’s like being at high altitudes, except the view isn’t as good.”
- “My body has been snatched by aliens, except in this case, the aliens are interferon and ribavirin.”
- “Interferon treatment was the easiest weight loss program I have ever been on. I didn’t even think of food.”
- “Every once in awhile, I lose my temper or say something inappropriate. It is amazing how words just pop out of my mouth that I never would have said before. At first I chastised myself about it. Now I just tell myself that I have interferon-induced Tourette’s syndrome.”
- “HCV treatment feels like a preview of old age.”

In addition to these descriptions, patients sometimes revealed stories about themselves. It was not

uncommon for patients (such as myself) to lose their cars or get into the wrong vehicle. One poor fellow thought he had taken his sunglasses off and realized that he had actually taken his dentures out - in public. The only time I ever ran out of gas was during treatment. I had placed a post-it on my dash board, reminding me to gas up the car. Unfortunately, the note covered my gas gauge and I did not see the low fuel warning indicator. What can one do but laugh.

Fortunately hep C treatment is much easier now and we don't hear these analogies as much anymore. However, having hep C can be a burden, and humor helps lighten the load. Support groups provide wonderful opportunities to swap amusing anecdotes. There is camaraderie in commiseration. Perhaps this is because when we gather, we already have a shared experience that needs few explanations and leaves room for merriment. Although laughter is not a cure for hep C, it sure can ease the burden. The [Hep Forums](#) are a good place to share your stories and laugh with others.

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