Liver Meeting 2015 - Imagine!

November 17, 2015 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Today is the last day of the liver meeting. I have attended quite a few of these over the years, and in the past I've left feeling discouraged. This years I am leaving with a sense of hope. This hope bubbled up in a weird way. It started because I was smitten with one of the medical displays at the meeting.

If you've never been to a medical meeting or convention, various companies exhibit their products. At AASLD, there is a huge room with representatives from pharmaceutical companies, publishers, specialty pharmacies, the clinical trial industry, diagnostic companies, and so on. I usually seek out the lone patient advocacy organization, the quiet booth in the corner that doesn't draw a crowd, but should. This year that distinction went to HealthHCV, an initiative under HealthHIV. They provide hepatitis C advocacy and education, and I was quite impressed.

However, the exhibit that I smote me (I don't think I've ever used smote in a sentence) was hosted by Supersonic Imagine. Basically, they sell an ultrasound (ShearWave Elastography or SWE) that detects fibrosis, and gives you a Metavir score of F0-F4. In a few painless minutes you have the information that in the old days required being stabbed in the side with a hollow-core needle. I wanted to jump up on the table, bare my midriff and find out how my liver was, but alas, I could see that they were not about to do that or they'd have everyone in the conference lined up, especially the drinkers.

Let me say up front that I do not have any financial interest in the company, nor do I work for them. They didn't ask me to write this blog. The reason I am so excited about SWE is because it represents how far we have come in a very short time. In 1988, I was infected with a virus that didn't have a name. My symptoms required a hideous liver biopsy with a huge needle. Now my hep C is cured, and if I ever need to know if I have liver damage, I could have a simple scan. This particular machine could be done in a doctor's office if the doctor had this tool.

At the Liver Meeting there are awards for posters. I don't think that exhibitors get awards, but if they did, I'd give it to Supersonic Imagine. They have earned their name. Yes, imagine, a world where patients don't need liver biopsies, a world where hepatitis C is curable. Actually, we don't have to imagine it, because it is here.

I hope you are reading the conference coverage posted on Hep News. There was some incredible data presented at the meeting. I'll write more in future blogs.

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