Liver Cancer after Hepatitis C Treatment

August 25, 2014 By Karen Hoyt

Liver Cancer after Hepatitis C Treatment is not the norm, but it is a threat to those of us who have severe liver damage. Reading about Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HCC) and Hepatitis C can take your mind in a couple of different directions. If you read the statistics for surviving the cancer, it is doom and gloom. But, just as there is hope for being cured of the Hepatitis C Virus, there are also hopeful options for dealing with HCC. I love to talk about hopeful outcomes! At one time, my end stage liver disease threatened my life. New drugs were released by the FDA in 2011. I was able to clear the virus and have been going ever since!

Because of the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) silently causing damage in so many people, Liver Cancer is on the rise. There are different estimates, but most agree that HCC ranges anywhere from the 3rd to the 6th leading cancer in the United States. The virus is deadly and can lead to liver scarring, called fibrosis. By the time many people are diagnosed, their liver is End Stage. Keep in mind that 2 weeks after I began treatment in 2011 with the new protease inhibitors, the virus was not detectable in my body. I remain undetected today! So, no more damage is done by Hepatitis C once a person becomes SVR or sustained viral response.

This is where the hope comes in. Because my liver is no longer full of inflammation from HCV, my liver enzymes have stabilized. A stable body is an important part of the treatment for liver cancer for many reasons. With a low sodium diet, I have been able to get off diuretics and have not had ascites drained in almost 4 years. With a healthy plant based protein, I have supported my liver and helped it to digest food with less of a burden. A beta-blocker has prevented any varices bleeds. As my hepatologist and oncologist began to discuss options, it quickly became clear that there could be a cure for liver cancer in my future.

Primary Hepatocellular Carcinoma is different from other types of cancer because it starts in the liver. It is usually the result of liver damage, or cirrhosis. A scarred liver from Hepatitis C can be a breeding ground for tumors and good host for HCC. Sometimes when there is cancer in another part of the body, it will spread to the liver, but it is not the same as they type that many Hepatitis C patients have.

I am an optimist and ALWAYS look for the bright side. I say it this way: I do not have cancer. There is a cancerous tumor on my liver.

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