My Hepatitis C Olympians

February 18, 2014 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Watching the Winter Olympics, I am moved by the grit, spirit, and determination of the Olympic athletes. I see these qualities in hepatitis C patients, people who face overwhelming physical and mental challenges, and yet still show up to help others. I know patients who have end-stage liver disease and horrendous symptoms, but maintain amazing attitudes. Some travel, work full time, and are physically active despite profound fatigue and hepatic encephalopathy.

Hepatitis C advocates are everywhere--writing blogs, encouraging others on facebook, in forums, and on the streets. If you want a dose of hope, read any of the bloggers here at HEP. For instance, whenever I hit a wall and think I can't do something, I read Karen Hoyt who has advanced cirrhosis and can run rings around me. I'm not exaggerating--Karen is a hepatic Olympian in my book.

The Winter Olympics will end soon, and I am reminded of the 130-170 million people in the world who are infected with hepatitis C. Nearly 1000 people die every day from hepatitis C. In the United States, more people die from hepatitis C than die from HIV. The majority of those with hepatitis C have yet to be diagnosed, which means they are unaware that they carry a potentially infectious, life-threatening virus. We need to reach them.

As the Olympic torch lights the way across the globe, let us carry the torch of hepatitis C awareness, every day and everywhere.

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