Patient Experience Living With Cirrhosis with John M., Part 1

August 29, 2018 By Connie M. Welch

Hepatitis C can lead to serious complications such as severe scarring, also known as cirrhosis. For patients who are dealing with Hepatitis C and Cirrhosis, this is a double battle. Hep C/Cirrhosis Warrior John M. was successfully treated and cured from Hepatitis C in 2014 with Harvoni.

Read John's Hep C Interview, part 1-3, see links below.

In addition to having Hepatitis C, John was diagnosed with cirrhosis (severe scarring of the liver). John shares his patient experience with cirrhosis and the key steps he takes daily that help him.

Connie: John, thank you for being with us and sharing your experience with cirrhosis and the steps that helps you live with this condition. Let's get started.

Connie: Can you share when you were diagnosed with cirrhosis?

John: I don't recall the exact date I received the news about the cirrhosis. There were many things going on at the same time. I had submitted a blood sample for a life insurance company and received the news 2 weeks later that I should contact my primary care physician immediately. He ran more tests, CBC, liver tests, etc… and then gave me the diagnosis about Hepatitis C. I didn't know how to react because I felt just fine. That would change later.

Connie: Can you share what caused your cirrhosis?

John: The only thing I can pin down as to the cause of my cirrhosis is the Hepatitis C and the life style I was leading back in the day. I was on a collision course with disaster, and I had no regard for myself or others. Thankfully, I hit bottom and turned my life to the Lord. Things improved immensely and I have never regretted that decision. It did not reverse the liver damage, but the Lord gave me the grace to accept and move forward.

Connie: When were you treated for Hepatitis C?

John: I've had 3 rounds of treatment for hepatitis C. The first one was in 2003 with Interferon injections and ribavirin. The side effects of this particular treatment were so rough that I used up 1100 hours of sick time that year. Eventually my doctor took me off the treatment saying the idea was to kill the virus, not the patient.

Later, we tried round 2 without the interferon, and with some other drug that I don't recall the

name of. This treatment was not successful either. I recall the doctor telling me not to be discouraged because there would be better drugs with less side effects coming. That was true, for in 2014 I started Harvoni and in 12 weeks treatment was finished. From the first blood tested I showed to be Non-Detected for the Hep C virus. Praise Jesus.

Connie: What tests were run to determine your cirrhosis?

John: I naively assumed that if I were free of the Hep C virus, I was good to go. That's when they started tests with the ultra sound, x-rays with contrast dye, and more tests after that.

Connie: What stage of cirrhosis do you have?

John: Eventually they determine I have stage 4 cirrhosis and I was handed off to the transplant team.

Connie: What type of cirrhosis do you have, compensated or decompensated?

John: I have decompensated cirrhosis. I experience side effects of HE (hepatic encephalopathy), which recurrence is evident. I've also experienced fluid retention (ascities).

Connie: Where you given a MELD score for the transplant list?

John: Yes, I have been given a MELD score that bounces around 15-18. My team keeps a close eye on it.

Connie: John, Thank you for sharing today. We look forward to hearing more from you tomorrow. We clearly see why you love the desert. What an outstanding shot. You're a very talented photographer!

Can you relate to John's experience with cirrhosis? Do you have a question or comment about Cirrhosis or Hepatitis C? We'd love to hear from you.

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