What Sweden and the Ukraine have in common

September 8, 2016 By Greg Jefferys

Sweden and the Ukraine have not much in common, one is a poor ex-Soviet nation struggling with getting democracy working properly the other is a wealthy western nation with a long history of democracy.
However both government block access to generic Hepatitis C treatment to their citizens who have Hep C and who can not access treatment through their nation's health system.
In the Ukraine it is simply that the government health system can in no way afford to pay for the patented Gilead treatment. At $85,000 that is about ten years wages for the average Ukrainian citizen.
Even in Sweden the government can not afford the cost of the branded Hep C medicines and so in Sweden the treatment is triaged so that people with a fibrosis score of F2 or above can access treatment.
This is a lot better deal than most people get from their governments however if you are F1 do you really want to live four or five or ten years with the Hep C virus in your body, waiting for the virus to do further damage to your liver?
Of course not! It is insane to tell a person:
"You have Hepatitis C, your blood is dangerous, you could infect someone in your family. We could treat you but we won't and also we will block you accessing any affordable treatment options."

So who would want to wait. Not me and not the lady who wrote this letter below.
She is now SVR 12. It is a great story of a person who took responsibility for their own health and pushed through the blocks that her government put in the way of her regaining her health.
A fantastic story.

Hi Greg,
This is my story. My spelling sometimes is wrong so you are welcome to correct. Please don't show my real name.

It all started when a few years ago I began to experience a terrible stomach pain, so I went to my doctor who did some blood tests. Then a week later got my results back by a letter they sent me.

When I opened letter and read it I felt like I was punched in the stomach.

In the letter Doctor notified me that I have Hepatitis C.

Then an incredible fear took over my mind. It felt like my life was over. I thought my husband will leave me and I would get fired from work and nobody will want anything to do with me.

It was one of darkest days of my life. I felt untouchable, unclean …. But when I told my husband and my extended family they were all very kind and supportive. It was such a huge relief!

So we went to a liver specialist and did the tests and he told me that I have fibrosis between stage one and two.

I live in Sweden and few years ago they only treated people with stage three fibrosis (but now they offer treatment for stage two as well). But because I was not yet stage 2 fibrosis I wasn't sick enough to get treatment. And because I live healthy lifestyle it may have taken years before I could get treatment. It was very hard to hear that I did not qualify for treatment because I did not want to live with this disease inside me with the continual risk of infecting those that I love.

And I did not want to wait years to get cured.

And I could not afford to buy the medicines myself because the cost was nearly one million Swedish Krona; an impossible amount of money. Then I heard that my mother also started having some health issues so I suggested to her that she should get tested for Hep C as well. Her diagnosis turned out to be worst than mine. She had stage four fibrosis and at the beginning stage of cirrhosis. She felt extremely tired and sick. Because she lives in Ukraine she had no chance for any kind of treatment. I wanted to find out the way to help her.

I've read many articles and blogs about available treatment and came upon Greg Jefferys' blog. I emailed Greg and asked many questions and decided to order generic medicines for my mom from Australia and for myself from India. Greg was fantastic helping every way possible. Medicine was send to Bulgaria because Sweden and Ukraine do not allow the importation of medicine by mail specially from non EU countries. So we asked a relative in Bulgaria to help us and they agreed so we organised this and I went down to Bulgaria up and picked up our medicines and my mother and I started our treatment together. I am happy to report that now eight months later my mother and I are both free from Hep C. My gratitude to Greg and all the people who work to help people to access generic medication is endless. Without their help I would have lost my mom and big part of my own health. I want to thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for doing God's work to keep people alive and healthy. Best wishes.

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