TEAM with your doctor

December 21, 2015 By Kimberly Morgan Bossley

A few weeks ago, I started this segment about putting your TEAM together. Several of you messaged me, saying you have those journals ready; many have even started writing in them. Don't worry if you have not started, the time will come when you will feel ready to do so.

You are now ready to do some research on finding a good doctor that you feel shares your best interest, health goals and direction for your health. But where does one start? I know for myself I was overwhelmed by the thought. I looked in my local phone book and when I searched under doctor or physician there were so many kinds, and I didn't understand what each field of medicine was. This is why I wanted to do this segment, because not having this information when I was being diagnosed was dreadful.

Many of us we were diagnosed by our family doctors during a routine visit. These doctors have a variety of knowledge however it is nearly impossible for one doctor to know and specialize in all aspects of the human body and diseases. Think of all the areas in one body; it is impossible for one doctor to be a "specialist" in every area.

This is why when you go to your "family" doctor with a particular health situation, he/she "refers" you to a specialist. It is not because they don't want to help you, but they understand the limits to their ability and knowledge. It's for your best care that they send you to a specialized doctor.

Now we are hearing that with hep C, many are getting diagnosed and treated by their family doctors. This is causing great concern in the community. Many of these doctors are overloaded with hep C patients and are being thrown into treating outside their expertise. As you can imagine this is alarming as we are reading more and more being treated without proper protocol etc. It is a national health concern happening all over the United States today.

I want anyone reading this to be more proactive in the search and care for their hep C. I do know many doctors in family medicine are slowly learning guidelines etc for treating all the various hep C genotypes, but it is the patient's job to interview and make sure that the doctor we are seeing is fully trained to treat hepatitis C. Ask questions and seek answers. If you are not getting a suitable response to a particular question about hep C, that is your cue to seek out another physician.

For those seeking a specialized doctor, you can start looking for a hepatologist, gastroenterologist, or specialist in internal medicine. When I first was diagnosed in 2005, an Infectious Disease doctor began my care. But after several appointment, his lack of treating me and my vision for my health were in two different directions. I ended up finding one of the leading hepatologists in the country here in Denver. This doctor had the same ideas I did as far as my treatment goals. He understood my willingness to FIGHT and my hard headed attitude that I was not going to let this disease beat me. Together we worked out a plan and goal for my liver health. I trust him in every aspect of my care and he in my judgement to take care of myself as well.

There was never a time I left his office feeling like a number. His genuine respect for my health, and my respect for his knowledge in treating me made a GREAT TEAM. Today we celebrate the victories of curing my hepatitis C. Yes, other health concerns such as liver cancer is something we watch closely, but

the relationship we built shows me that I can trust him with my health.
It is a partnership in health you must now look for - that medical provider that listens, cares and is also willing to give it to you straight. Someone who is not afraid to push you to your limit and who is sympathetic to your concerns. You have to TRUST this person with the care you are about to receive.
If you feel that things are not “clicking” with your doctor, do more research and try to find a better fit. You may live in a rural area where your options are very limited. If that is the case, you then need to sit down with this doctor and share this “team” approach with him/her. Let them know it is important to you that both of you come to some sort of mutual understanding for your care to be successful. Be respectful to their profession and understand time limits in care. There ie a waiting room full of others seeking one on one time with this doctor as well. Have your journal with you. Have your questions ready.
Your are interviewing for the biggest battle of your life. You must be protective about your health and those who join you on this journey. However, you must learn to trust those who know about the disease, and not judge their recommendations for your treatment. (This is why the interview process is so important.) Be respectful and polite during the interview process. But also be your own advocate in your liver health. If you have a deep gut feeling something is not right... trust it. It is you that forms your TEAM. You choose who will be in your corner...make sure it is with a team headed to the same goal.
It seems like we are really digging in deep but wait for next segment... INSURANCE
The next step is Insurance. Yes the dreadful means of how we are going to pay for the care and treatment of this disease.
For Today, Stay Strong in your fight and your eyes focused on the finish line
“Not Without a FIGHT!~HCV~(c)” Together WE are STRONG!
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