The First World Hepatitis Summit

September 7, 2015 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

It's Labor Day weekend in the U.S., and I am spending it laboring (or labouring as Hep's Australian bloggers would write). I am catching up on gardening, cooking, and cleaning, which is hardly labor-intensive. I am also socializing and relaxing too, so it isn't all work and no play.

The one thing I didn't do this weekend was attend the World Hepatitis Summit in Glasgow. Alan Franciscus generously offered me the chance to represent the Hepatitis C Support Project. I passed on the opportunity, knowing that my desire to change the world must be balanced with my need to take care of my health. I worked hard for this precious new liver and strong body, and the idea of a round trip coach flight from California to Scotland with a back that hates sitting sounded risky.

Instead, I sat at home and celebrated the amazingness of it all. The summit, co-sponsored by WHO and the World Hepatitis Alliance, was hosted by the Scottish government. Delegates came from more than 60 countries. (See the NVHR blog at Hep). The aim is to help countries enhance action to prevent viral hepatitis infection and ensure that people who are infected are diagnosed and offered treatment.

"This summit is about empowering countries to take the practical steps needed at a national level. It has brought here to Scotland patients' groups and civil society from across the world to support countries in doing this. We can eliminate viral hepatitis as a major global killer but we must all work together to make that vision a reality," said Charles Gore, president of the World Hepatitis Alliance.

Viral hepatitis is one of the world's leading causes of death. There are approximately 400 million people in the world who live with viral hepatitis, taking an estimated 1.45 million lives each year. Hepatitis B and C together cause approximately 80 per cent of all liver cancer deaths. Because the liver is a non-complaining organ, most people living with chronic viral hepatitis do not know they are infected.

The conference was a huge success, ending with this unifying message, called the Glasgow Declaration on Viral Hepatitis: "Today we commit to set targets towards the elimination of hepatitis as a global health threat." (#EliminateHep)

I can commit to that. How about you?

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