

MORNING BUZZ: COFFEE & HEP C

Researchers in France found that those who drank more than three or more cups of coffee per day reported 80% less treatment side-effects. Already known is that drinking large amounts of coffee is associated with lower levels of liver enzymes and slower progression of liver disease.

One theory is that the effects could be a result of caffeine combating the extreme tiredness and lack of concentration and alertness often reported by patients receiving hepatitis C treatment.

What's in your cup? Find out more:

<http://mobile.aidsmap.com/page/2074096>

Shorter Therapy with New HCV Drug?

Research is showing that 24 weeks of the newly approved telaprevir in combination with pegylated-interferon and ribavirin can be as effective for many patients as 48 weeks—meaning that 24 weeks therapy for genotype 1 is a good possibility for many patients compared to the old required 48 weeks in genotype 1.

Find out more:

http://www.natap.org/2011/HCV/091611_01.htm

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REACHING ACCEPTANCE: GRIEVING THE LOSS OF MY HEALTH

Several years ago I inquired about a grief seminar held at my workplace and questioned a staff health care worker why there was a need to offer it. She indicated that people not only grieve when someone dies, they can grieve any loss in their lives. The loss of a pet, job or something as minor as losing your favourite earrings could be issues that each and every one of us can grieve and this seminar was initiated to help staff cope with grief in all aspects of their lives. Grief is defined by the experts to consist of five stages; denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

I could see the reasoning in this and when I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C I grieved the loss of my health.

I shall never forget the day my doctor called to tell me I tested positive for the Hep C antibodies. Of course, I went into complete shock and denial and walked around in a daze for weeks. I was hopeful that it was a false positive. I waited six weeks for an actual confirmation so I had had plenty of time to deny thanks to our health care system. It was six weeks of extreme angst and at the same time I bargained for my children's blood tests to come back negative. I was fearful that I may have passed it along to them in the womb and I bargained that I would gladly host the virus in my body instead of theirs and, fortunately, I did not pass the virus on to my children. I successfully bargained and I was rewarded.

See "Reaching Acceptance" continued on page 3

COMMUNITY SERVICE SAVED: SAFE INJECTION IN VANCOUVER

On September 30th the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that a safe drug-injection site in Vancouver can stay open.

The Insite clinic, located in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, is the only safe injection site for drug addicts in North America. Funded by taxpayers, it was established in 2003 so that the thousands of intravenous drug users in the Eastside area had a place to shoot up that provided clean needles, sterilized water and medical supervision.

The Insite clinic has a federal exemption that permits illegal drug use.

"The effect of denying the services of Insite to the population it serves and the correlative increase in the risk of death and disease to injection drug users is grossly disproportionate to any benefit that Canada might derive from presenting a uniform stance on the possession of narcotics," Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin wrote in a key section of the ruling.

Eighty-seven per cent of drug users in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside are infected with Hepatitis C.

FIRST PERSON: WORDS FROM MY CAREGIVER

I'll never forget that sunshine autumn afternoon in 1998 when my doctor informed me that I have tested positive for Hepatitis C. Hepatitis was in my medical chart from 1975, before it was categorized into letters A, B and C. Regular blood tests were done twice yearly and the result has always been good. My doctor's expression was seemingly shocked as he explained Hepatitis C diagnosis to me. I felt distraught with the unexpected information and all I could think about was where will I go from here? Home was an hour drive and I was alone.

My husband Alton was just home from work, we began preparing supper together and I remained very quiet. Alton noticed the unusual clanging of dishes getting louder and louder as I was setting the table. "What's wrong?" he asked. While tending the supper on the stove with my back toward him, I blurted out my diagnosis. I didn't realize those words would be that difficult to express to my husband but they were. Alton's spontaneous reaction was "Geez! That's the one that kills you!"

I tried to be calm and not let it show but his reaction was most devastating to me. My eyes filled with tears. Alton gently cupped my cheeks in his hands, looked into my eyes and said "Whatever happens, we are in this together, no matter what."

April 4th 2005, we began seeing specialist after specialist while getting prepared for treatment. By December, we met with our Nurse Practitioner and final specialist Doctor who informed us about the result of my liver biopsy. It was at third stage cirrhosis. He said I would have approximately 5 to 8 years without treatment. On that snowy December day Alton and I left the hospital with a tremendous amount of information about Hepatitis C and what to expect with treatment. I was so overwhelmed with this knowledge, I couldn't think straight. I managed to hold back tears until we were on the highway for home. Alton assured me that together, we will win this battle and whatever happens, we're in it together.

Treatment began January 2006. In the first few months our relationship did not change. By spring my GP suggested that I begin some antidepressants to help with anxiety. I surely didn't feel that I needed more meds and I was not the one with the temper, or so I thought. On our next appointment with our GP we came home with a prescription for me and also one for Alton. The new meds made me feel sleepy and more tired than ever and after two days, I decided I didn't need the antidepressants anymore. Alton continued using his as he said they were helping him feel more relaxed.

As time went on we had many nasty arguments between us, sometimes lingering on all night. If it had not happened on a week-end, Alton would miss the next day of work. For me, after these arguments my energy was so low I was not able to get out of bed for the next two days. On one occasion I decided to leave home. It was bitter cold one early morning when I had my mind made up. I was dressed with ski pants, winter coat and scarf, my old blue hat, and winter boots. I also took along a supply of medication. As I was backing out of the garage, Alton handed me his cell phone in case I needed to call home. I was so mad when I left the driveway, I felt like smoking the tires as I turned onto the pavement. I had not been driving for some time so I didn't try any stunts. I wasn't out of sight more than five minutes when the cell phone rang. I eased over to the shoulder and answered. Alton was asking me to come back and we would settle our differences.

I was so glad to hear his voice and I answered "as soon as I find a safe place to turn, I'll be back". Feeling lonely and irresponsible, I couldn't wait to be home again. Alton met me at the door; we hugged each other and cried together. I said I feel like a stupid old woman out without my support. Alton had blankets ready on the couch where I bedded down for the day. My favorite quilt was next to me and our dog Sophie cuddled in to help keep me warm.

There were many similar incidents when afterward I always felt like an out of control freaked out madwoman. Alton was my caregiver at home, he was the one I was mad at the most, the one whom I took my frustrations out on, the one who I felt safe with and the one I mostly depended on.

See "Words From My Caregiver" continued next page

See what's new at HepNS by checking out our [Facebook](#) link



on our website www.HepatitisOutreach.com

REACHING ACCEPTANCE: GRIEVING THE LOSS OF MY HEALTH CONT'D

I went through the first three stages embracing denial, anger and bargaining as my new best friends. I realize now that there is no set pattern to the stages of grief and I lingered on anger and bargaining for a long time following my diagnosis. I would switch from one to another and eventually settled quite comfortably into the anger stage of grief. At first I was angry with the typical arrogant "why me" attitude. I did not practice a high risk behaviour at any time in my life nor did I have a blood transfusion, therefore, it was not possible for me to have Hepatitis C. How did I end up with such a virus? I was egotistical and sure that someone else was to blame and I was seeking answers. Eventually, my arrogance was stifled by the instinct to survive. It was fight or flight and I decided to fight and to undergo treatment and ended up doing 72 weeks of interferon and anti-viral drug therapy. My treatment was successful and for that I am thankful.

The main thing I realized regarding the stages of grief is that there is no set time to get through all the stages. Each and every one of us take our own time to get through the grieving process. It is nearly four years since I was first diagnosed and I am still angry. Well, to put it not so politely I am mad as hell. I am waiting for acceptance, but it has been slow coming. Recently, a dear friend who was coping with her own profound grief relayed a message to me that has helped me see the possibility of acceptance. She told me that I would move on with my life, but things will never be the same. I can accept the fact that things will never be the same for me since my doctor called me December 18, 2007 and said: "Rose, I'm looking at test results that were done by your life insurance provider and they are indicating that you tested positive for Hepatitis C."



Rose

WORDS FROM MY CAREGIVER: ALTON'S WORDS

This is what he had to say;

I wanted to do everything I could for Bette but there were times when I would like to have walked off the face of the earth and never come back.

I detest needles but I gave Bette hers from the second week to the end of the 72 weeks.

I always counted out her medication by the week and made sure she didn't miss any at meals.

I made phone calls to check on her several times a day when I was at work.

I missed many work days when treatment was at the worst part in the last few months.

Sometimes it was almost unbearable, not just for Bette but for me as well. It felt like there was nothing I could do for her except be there for comfort. Meals and household chores became my other work besides my regular day job.

My description of full-time housework is not a good one. For those who have this position, I commend you but I do not envy you. For Bette and me, both of our lives have changed. I believe we have a closer relationship and I know it needs to be worked on every day to keep it that way. The arguments we had were horrible and I truly believe it was all about rage brought on from discomfort and pain.

I would not want to go through this again but if it had to be, I would give it a try. It is not only the sick who suffer, those who live with it every day also suffer but in a different way. I truly believe if two people have a strong love for each other in the beginning they can endure almost anything together, even the effects of treatment.



Bette & Alton with Halifax City Councillor Dawn Sloane at HepNS World Hepatitis Day 2011 event

Bette & Alton

ABOUT US

HepNS is a charitable organization that reduces the impact of hepatitis through support, information and education.

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Community Connections is a quarterly informative publication of the Hepatitis Outreach Society of Nova Scotia. We welcome your comments and contributions.

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GIVE FEEDBACK & ENTER TO WIN: HEPNS LAUNCHES SURVEY

HepNS is embarking on a fact finding mission: to find out what you want from the organization. With the generous support of the Province of Nova Scotia's Voluntary Sector Professional Capacity Trust, HepNS has launched a survey to find out if what we are doing is meeting the needs of Nova Scotians. We welcome your thoughts, ideas and take all feedback seriously.

Throughout November, up until December 16th, we are offering a chance to win a \$50.00 prize from Starbucks to everyone who completes our survey. To enter, please complete either an online or mailed in version of the survey and fill out the entry form attached. There will be one prize awarded from a draw of all online entries, and another prize from a draw of all mailed in entries. All feedback is confidential and entry forms will be detached prior to the survey results being reviewed.

To complete the online survey, click on the "survey" link on our website: www.hepatitisoutreach.com or to obtain a copy of the mail in version, either email Colin Green at Director@HepatitisOutreach.com or call 902-420-1767.

Help us create a vision for the future.

REMEMBERING BRUCE DEVENNE: COMMUNITY ACTIVIST

Well known community activist and vocal critic of municipal and provincial politics, Bruce DeVenne succumbed to liver cancer that developed as a result of Hepatitis C. After contracting Hepatitis C from a blood transfusion himself, Bruce became a well known champion for people seeking compensation due to tainted blood.

For more on Bruce and his life see:
<http://hcvadvocate.blogspot.com/2011/08/devenne-dies-of-cancer.html>



IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

HepNS Launches a new Safer Tattoo and Piercing Project for junior high school aged youth.

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Please send me further information about HepNS

I would like to make this donation in memory / honor of _____

Your support allows HepNS to provide valuable education, information and support across the province of Nova Scotia. An income tax receipt will be issued for donations of \$10.00 or more. Donations can also be given on our website or through Visa and Mastercard by calling 902-420-1767

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