

## Robin Roth's Story

Hepatitis C affected my life even before I knew I had it, and continues to affect me, even though I no longer show any signs of the hepatitis C virus (HCV) after successful interferon/ribavirin treatment. According to a liver biopsy two years post-treatment, my liver has "improved markedly." I feel better than ever and have a healthier lifestyle from dealing with this health issue.

When I finally got my 1<sup>st</sup> liver biopsy, after unknowingly having hepatitis C for at least 25 years, I was shocked to hear Stage 4, beginning cirrhosis. I needed treatment but I had a low chance of success because of my extremely high viral load, genotype 1a, a lot of fibrosis and even cirrhosis, as well as my age and the length of infection. It was depressing. Being female was my only "good responder" factor and at 54 I was running low on those helpful female hormones. Since I was otherwise healthy and had few symptoms, it was hard to choose a treatment with a reputation for bad side effects, and an estimated 12% chance of success in my particular situation. But if someone was going to be in that 12%, why not me? I resolved I would "make healing my priority."

With that affirmation and goal, I did a variety of healing practices along with the pegylated interferon and ribavirin to increase my chances of becoming a sustained responder. I'm a health educator and was already using holistic health methods, so I did research, joined a Hep C support group, got acupuncture, took a ton of herbs, practiced qigong & tai chi, improved my health habits including, and listened to the meditation tapes that Margo Adair, my meditation teacher, made for me. As one of the techniques I used for healing, meditation helped me enormously in many different ways. When I got my energy back, I felt so grateful to feel "cured." I wanted to share this easy yet powerful meditation technique with all of my old friends with hepatitis C, with my new support group buddies, and with all fellow Hep C folks who were interested. That's why Margo and I created the meditation CD *"Self-Care for Hepatitis C ~ Applied Meditation for a Healthy Liver"*. Learn more at [www.hepCmeditations.org](http://www.hepCmeditations.org), where there is a free sample meditation *"Seven Minutes for Liver Health."*

I'm also using my still increasing energy for hepatitis C advocacy. I've joined local and national hepatitis C organizations – CalHEP (California Hepatitis Alliance), HepC-United, and have been working to get a San Francisco Hepatitis C Task Force going that the Mayor will appoint and will help shape a fuller and more organized response to this too ignored epidemic. I teach a 1 unit course at City College of S.F. called Hepatitis ABCs and the students all do advocacy projects and feel much empowered. I think advocacy is a great cure for depression and my motto is "turn irritability into action!"