
Hepatitis C Choices in Care

Choosing A Journey to Health

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What are you scared of?

Why not take the 1st step in Choosing a Journey to Health?

- Does what you eat define who you are?
- Does trying different methods define who you are?
- Try to figure out what you are holding onto – is it more important than your health?
- CAUTION - Side Effects
 - Feel better
 - Doing something – empowered
 - More energy

You will be guided, accept the help

Boats & Helicopters

A man was caught in a flood. The water was up to his waist when a boat came by.

The people in the boat yelled, "Get in!" "No," said the man. "I have lived my life as God desires. God will save me. Go help someone else." The water was up to his shoulders when a second boat came by. Once again, the people yelled, "Get in!"

"No," said the man. "I have lived my life as God desires. God will save me. Go help someone else." After a while, the water rose over the man's head. Just then, a helicopter appeared and dropped a rope down to him. "No," yelled the man over the rotors' roar, "I have lived my life as God desires. God will save me. Go help someone else." A short time later, the man drowned. He arrived in Heaven, thoroughly confused and asking God, "What happened? I lived my entire life just the way I thought you wanted me to. Why didn't you save me?" To which God replied, "Well, I tried! I sent two boats and a helicopter."

Determine Your Priorities

- Cure
- Health
- Less Symptoms
- Etc...

How Much Would You Pay?

To feel better?

To be cured?

□ “Spend it”

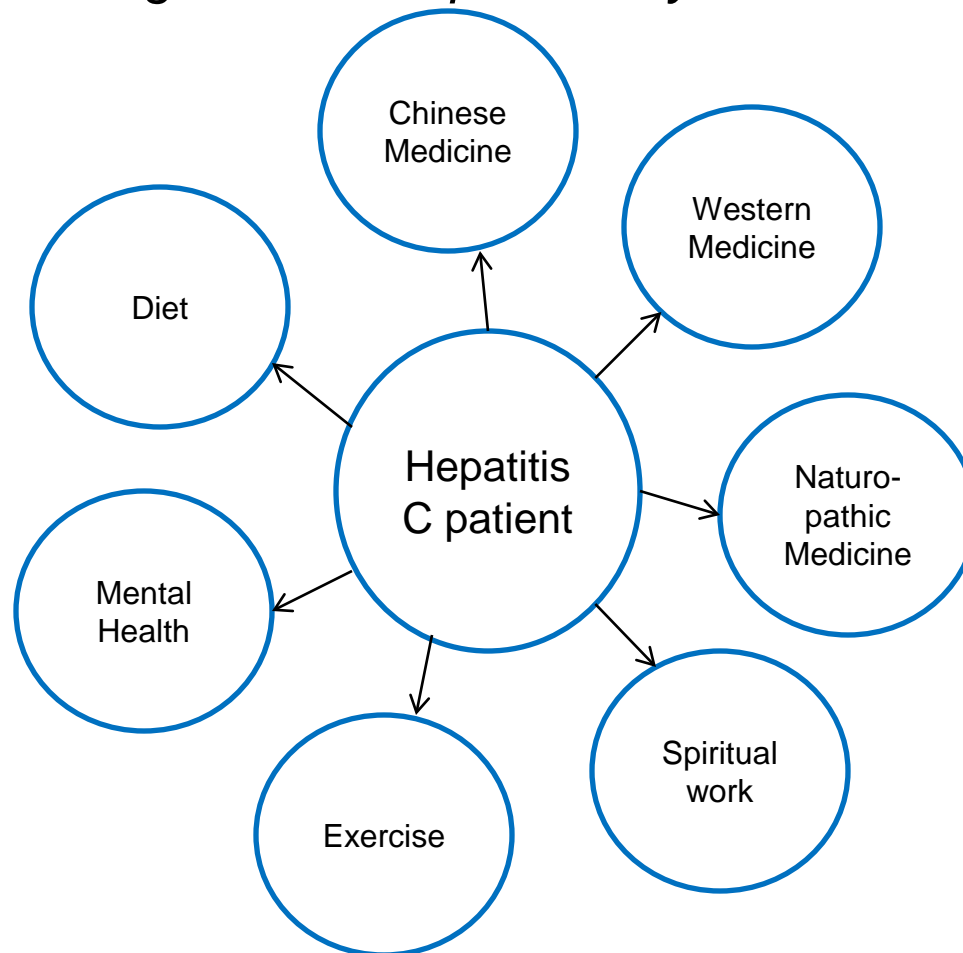
(or at least some of it)

Health costs for western medicine and alternative can be high, but if you set a goal and are willing to spend some money you can find help. You can also save money by not doing things that hurt your health.

Information Empowers

Cover up each of the outer circles in succession asking yourself:

“Can I ignore this aspect of my health care?”



Use Professionals

Find the right health care providers

“Most people spend more time looking for their next car than they do looking for their doctor.”

-Cleveland Clinic



Nobody else has the time

Choosing a Journey to health will have to be a commitment, it would be great if one place or person has all the answers. It doesn't work that way, you have to spend the time on all aspects of your health.

“Never hope more than you work” — Rita Mae Brown

The Power of Positive Thinking as outlined in books like:

- The Power of Intention
- The Secret

Positive thinking is a vital part of a healing process

Results Based Medicine

- Due Diligence
- Look at the Data
- Ask for references
- Ask about results

Set the Table (*Increasing your odds*)

- Educate yourself
- Get in the best physical shape you can
- Develop your support system
- Give yourself the best chance, it all works together

Football Coach Story

My high school football coach told me the following:

You may work harder than the player across the ball from you and he may drink and smoke and break all the rules AND when the ball is snapped he may beat you easily. Which may cause you to think, why did I put in all the hard work and maintain my discipline on the rules.

But remember, if he had worked as hard as you “he would kill you” be thankful he didn’t have discipline.

Health is the same way, your genetics may have predisposed you to certain conditions, where you need to maintain a discipline where others don’t. But if you don’t, watch out!



Give yourself the best chance...We do know a lot

Include:

- Fresh fruits & vegetables
- Fish
- Good protein
- Whole grains
- Exercise
- Meditation
- Yoga

Avoid:

- Smoking
- Excess alcohol
- Refined sugar
- Excess red meat
- Fried foods
- Stress
- Chemicals
- Depression

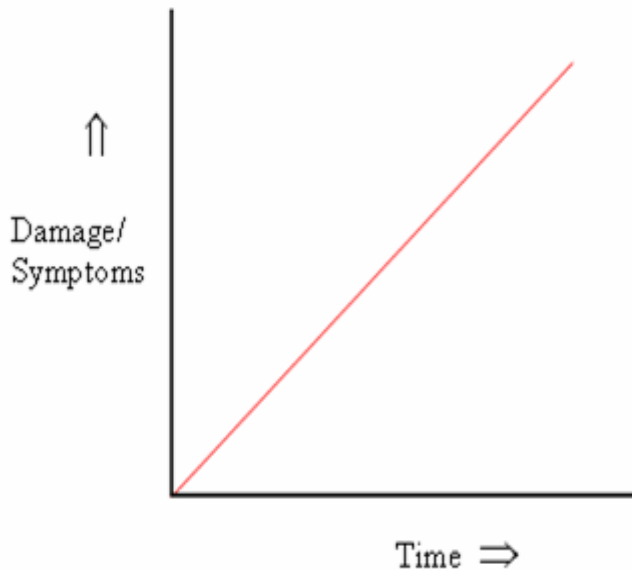
Give yourself the best chance...We do know a lot...

We know that all of these activities help healing as well:

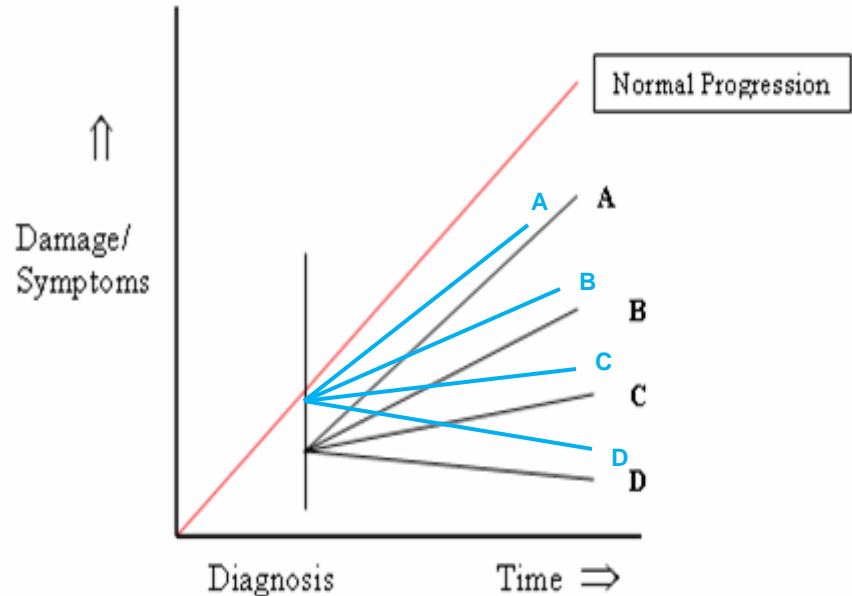
- Volunteering
- Giving
- Helping others helps you
- Be a success story for others
- Stay motivated

Can you change the natural progression?

Graph 1: Natural progression of a chronic condition in an individual



Graph 2: Potential changes in progression of a chronic condition in an individual who makes lifestyle changes



Each lifestyle change you make may add benefit on the progress of disease

“We only know, what we know”

As you go through your journey, you will probably discover that:

Reality maybe that we only know 10% of what we would want to know

Live long enough

to live forever

Technology is making great advances, but you need to give yourself the best change until they arrive.

The key to your universe is
that you can choose

Why people don't heal ...and how they can

Don't become a victim and don't let
your disease become your identity

10 Truths I Believe to be Self-Evident

My journey with hepatitis C has been one of discovery and learning. There is much we do not yet know about hepatitis C. However, in reflecting on the major lessons I've learned in my journey with hepatitis C, I have come up with a list of "truths." Borrowing from the words of Thomas Jefferson in The Declaration of Independence, I hold these truths about living with hepatitis C to be self-evident.

1. It's the immune system

The 1992 Clinton-Gore campaign made the saying, "It's the economy, stupid." part of modern American culture. Not to be insulting, but when it comes to chronic hepatitis C, it's the immune system, stupid. The immune system is the body's defense against viruses. We know the immune system is responsible for clearing the hepatitis C virus from the body. We also know that much of the liver damage that occurs with chronic hepatitis C is mediated by the immune system. Therefore, it follows that anything we can do to enhance the function of the immune system is potentially helpful. Conversely, anything that impairs the immune system is potentially harmful. Many of the other "truths" I include in this list ultimately relate back to the immune system.

I'd like to add a note of caution to the statement I just made about doing anything you can to improve your immune function. It is very easy to fall into the pattern of thinking that if a little of something is good, then a lot must be even better! However, this type of thinking can get you into trouble. As discussed earlier, excessive vitamins, nutritional supplements, herbs, and even exercise can potentially do more harm than good. If I had to give one word of advice to others with chronic hepatitis C, it would be "moderation."

2. You are what you eat

This is a fact of life. With the help of the liver, our bodies transform what we eat and drink into the very substance of our bodies. While we may want to think what we eat doesn't matter, logic and basic biology tell us otherwise.

3. Stress management is important

Scientists have known for many years that stress depresses immune function. As noted in number 1, anything that interferes with immune function is potentially detrimental to people with chronic hepatitis C. Recognizing and managing your stressors is an important way to influence your course with hepatitis C.

4. Protect your liver!

The liver is a vital organ. It processes nearly every substance that enters the body. The liver is the primary target of the hepatitis C virus.

Anything you can do to decrease the demands on the liver while it is under siege from HCV is potentially helpful. You can protect your liver by eliminating alcohol from your diet, avoiding toxins such as smoke, pollutants, and chemicals, limiting your intake of complex chemicals such as medications and supplements, and eating a healthy diet.

5. Time is on your side

For the vast majority of people, chronic hepatitis C is a very slowly progressive disease. With the exception of those people who are diagnosed with advanced cirrhosis, hepatitis C is not an immediate threat to your life. Moreover, for most people with HCV, it will never be a threat to life. In other words, most people infected with HCV will not die of the virus, but rather with the virus. Please know that I am not minimizing the challenges of living with hepatitis C. I am trying to point out that most people with hepatitis C have time to make choices about how to manage their disease and change their lifestyle, and that hepatitis C is not an automatic death sentence.

6. You are as you think

As with all life experiences, your outlook, perceptions, and attitudes influence your experience with hepatitis C. No one wants to get hepatitis C. But once you have the virus, you are free to choose how you will react to having it. Many emotions can come into play when a person is first diagnosed including anger, fear, helplessness, shame, and others. But after the initial period of adjustment, it is up to you how you choose to live with your diagnosis. Persistent anger and feelings of helplessness may make living with HCV quite difficult. A positive outlook and hope can make daily life much easier and more enjoyable. Keep in mind that no feeling in and of itself is "bad" or "good." What gives your feelings their importance is how they affect your daily life, and how they contribute or detract from your sense of well-being.

7. Body and mind work hand-in-hand

One of the most amazing features of human beings is the intricate and inseparable interactions between the body and the mind. Physical symptoms such as headaches, sleep disturbances, and changes in appetite that accompany depression and stress clearly demonstrate the fundamental relationship between the body and the mind. These interactions are ever-present in all people. Therefore, practices that help us achieve and maintain a healthy balance between the body and mind have the potential to improve both our physical and mental sense of wellness. A variety of practices can enhance the health of our mind-body relationship including exercise, healthy body weight, meditation, prayer, visualization, and many others.

8. Information can be healing

Hepatitis C is a serious illness. The overwhelming reaction for most people when they are first diagnosed is fear. We all fear the unknown. Fear is very stressful, and we know stress is unhealthy for the immune system. In my experience, the best antidote to fear is information. The more I learned about hepatitis C and my options, the less fear I had. In this way, information can be healing. However, be aware that there are many unsubstantiated claims about so-called "cures" for hepatitis C. The unregulated nature of the Internet sometimes makes it difficult to separate fact from fiction. I urge you to be cautious, and do everything you can to make sure the information you gather is credible.

On a related note, I offer another word of well-intended advice based on my personal experiences. While information can help us overcome our fears and regain a sense of control, too much of a "good" thing can erode these benefits. In other words, get the information you need to feel comfortable, but be careful not to let your quest for information about hepatitis C take over your life. As with all things, moderation is usually the best and healthiest course of action.

9. Support helps

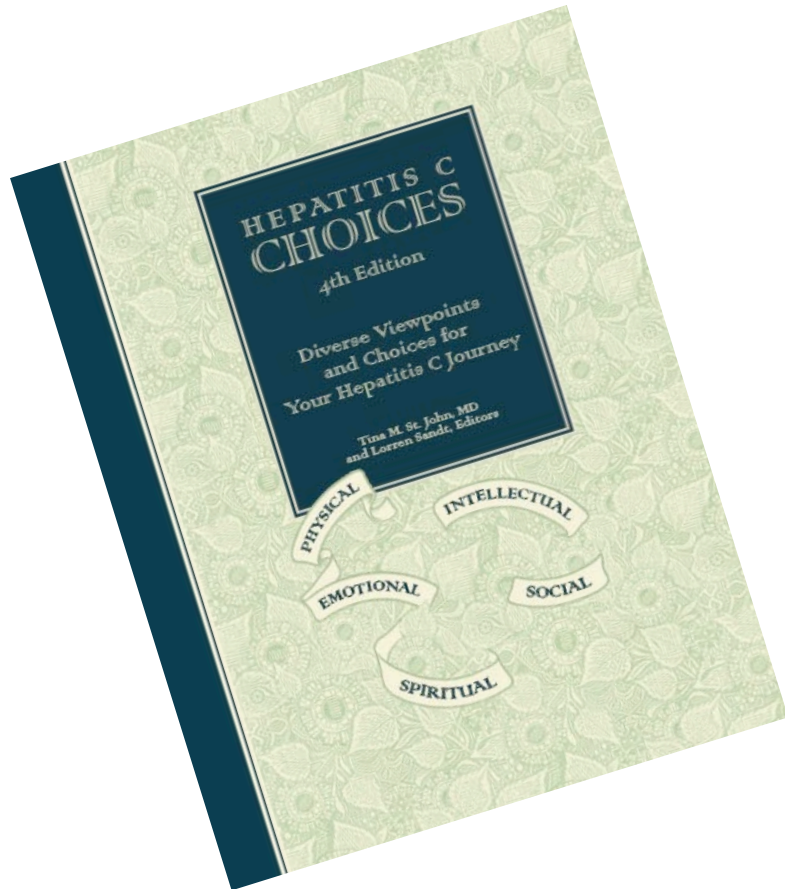
All of us struggle at different times with our inborn need for independence and our social, interdependent nature. But in times of stress, one of our greatest sources of relief is recognizing our need for others, and taking advantage of the supportive resources available to us. An illness can be an isolating experience, but you are most certainly not alone. There are many sources of support available such as family, friends, individual counseling, and Internet-based and in-person support groups. It is a personal strength, not a weakness, to recognize what you need and to seek help. Keep in mind, too, the positive effects of support run both ways. By that I mean, you may find great satisfaction in both receiving support and later, by offering your support to others. Giving and receiving are two sides of the same valuable coin.



10. There is no magic bullet

It was largely wishful thinking, but when I was first diagnosed with hepatitis C, I thought I would be able to find a "magic bullet" - a medicine or treatment that would quickly and painlessly clear my body of the virus without interrupting my life or requiring me to make any changes. But the truth of the matter is that at least for now, there is no magic bullet, no quick and easy fix for hepatitis C. Furthermore, no single medical discipline has "the answer" when it comes to hepatitis C. Like most of the chronic illnesses that currently affect millions of people worldwide, living with hepatitis C may require us to make some difficult choices and changes. But the good news is that when you accept your responsibilities with this condition, you are rewarded by regaining a sense of control and self-determination with respect to your circumstance.

For more information



Chapter 23: Choosing: My Journey, My Choices

http://www.hepcchallenge.org/choices/pdf/Chapter_23_OL.pdf

Visit us on line at www.HepCChallenge.org

