



MEET LISA

Lisa is a hepatitis C (HCV) patient who hails from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. She is 54 years old and was diagnosed with hepatitis C two years ago. Lisa is passionate about the need for research into HCV and views her participation with M3 Global Research as an important component to helping the biopharmaceutical industry understand the patient journey.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), up to 3.9 million people in the US may suffer with a chronic form of hepatitis C, and an estimated 40 million worldwide according to the World Health Organization (WHO). A treatable condition, HCV causes ongoing inflammation of the liver and can lead to symptoms throughout the body. Left untreated, it can leave

sufferers vulnerable to severe health complications including cirrhosis or liver cancer.

The eldest of three sisters, Lisa was diagnosed in the early stages of the disease, thanks to knowledge of the symptoms of hepatitis C gleaned from her siblings, who both had also contracted the condition prior to Lisa contracting it. As a result of the early diagnosis, her day-to-day life isn't impacted notably, but she is still constantly aware of her condition. This lingering concern isn't only about her health but also her worries about health insurance and the politicisation of healthcare in the US, which directly impacts her treatment and care.

Despite her relatively recent diagnosis, she does



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not know how or when she contracted hepatitis C. While many of her early symptoms could have been explained away by lifestyle issues, HCV was a consideration because of her family history. Tests revealed fatty liver deposits and alongside her viral load lab work and glucose levels, she was diagnosed with diabetes at the same time. Because she doesn't drink alcohol, her liver issues were unlikely to be related to alcohol intake, which again suggested HCV.

Given the infectious nature of HCV, Lisa is very mindful of her condition, particularly when her grandchildren are visiting. She ensures they never come in contact with her toothbrush and is vigilant if she or one of them are ever bleeding.

She is acutely aware of the stigma around hepatitis C and talks candidly about how she used to view sufferers until she became one of them. With that stigma in mind, she delayed sharing the news of her diagnosis with her family, worrying that they would share her concerns of being perceived as 'unclean' and limit her exposure to her beloved grandchildren. However, being diagnosed in 2016, she recognises that there is more knowledge and less stigma now than for her sisters who were

diagnosed in the early 2000s. Through their experiences, she came to learn just how common it actually is, and readily admits that without that background she would have been horrified by her diagnosis.

She credits her peer network for providing her with a safe space. Support comes from both her sisters, who helped her understand what to expect, and from Facebook patient support and advocacy groups. Advice from these resources has helped her navigate co-pay advocacy and assistance.

Lisa is thankful for the wealth of information and resources available on the internet to support her research. She worries about patients who aren't aware of the plethora of support services available, especially those without insurance who aren't aware of ways they can still access care.

Lisa is actively pursuing treatment and management options with her physician, with the intention of getting her diabetes under control first. She has always been extremely proactive and is committed to finding ways to cure her HCV, which has involved extensive research into the treatment options available to her. Based on conversations and initial



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lab work, Lisa and her physician are confident her HCV can be cured.

While Lisa recognises that drug companies are primarily profit-generating, she also appreciates the opportunities they provide to low-income patients. She has benefitted from this in the past, accessing drugs free of charge directly from the pharmaceutical companies. Treatment for HCV has evolved dramatically, and Lisa expects better outcomes than her sister could expect when she was being treated 20 years ago, although her treatment was ultimately successful. In the future, Lisa hopes to see the development of a vaccine against hepatitis C so that this illness becomes something her granddaughters never need to worry about contracting.

“Don’t panic” is Lisa’s advice to anyone who is newly-diagnosed. Hepatitis C is well-researched and understood and there is a wealth of information readily available. Through her own journey, Lisa has become a passionate advocate for patient knowledge and encourages other patients to start researching as their first step following a diagnosis. “Forewarned is forearmed.” She also recommends to those who don’t have health

insurance to approach drug companies directly. Her final piece of advice: “Take precautions, but don’t be ashamed. Having knowledge is far more important”.