Cheers to a Friend

April 16, 2010 By Shawn Decker

One of my friends, Katie, had surgery this week for problems she'd been having as a result of Crohn's, mainly recurring and consistent pain. I was so happy that the procedure went well, and hope this is the beginning of a pain free existence for her. One that is long overdue.

She'd been hoping that it wouldn't come to this. They tried experimental treatment strategies, all kinds of attempts were made, but each one fell short of it's intended goal. She was fearful that something would go wrong if she had surgery, and just kind of accepted the discomfort as par for the course...

I'm typing this fresh off a talk that Gwenn and I just gave at Virginia Wesleyan College. I only mention this because each time we speak, I relive the worst moments of my medical existence, but in 1999 when my t-cells dropped below 50 and my viral load was pushing a million copies. It was the culmination of years of fatigue, years of accepting less and just being thankful for life in and of itself. Though Katie knows the feeling of fatigue well, she didn't have the attitude that got me in trouble- I thought I had HIV whipped.

It was a tough pill to swallow when I realized that wasn't the case. My "surgery", metaphorically speaking, was having to go on HIV meds- which I feared because of all the complaining I heard from friends about side effects at my support group. But, after getting used to it, and also after getting my first lab work back and seeing the dramatic change in my medical misfortunes, I felt something I hadn't felt in quite some time: energy.

Once I got my weight back up to normal, I couldn't believe what it felt like to sleep three less hours a day. It was only after feeling healthy that I realized how much my pet virus had bullied me without me even knowing it.

The day after her surgery, Gwenn and I visited Katie in the hospital. She was sitting up, chatting with us and her parents who came to town to be with her. I was relieved to see her in such good spirits. Maybe it was the high quality pain meds, or maybe it was just her own sense of relief and hearing the doctor say, against her worst fears, that everything went according to plan.

I love all my negatoid and positoid friends, and wish only the best for them health-wise. And as Katie returns home this weekend, just up the street from me, I'm certain that this is her moment of turning the tide against her own medical bully. It's a life-changing moment...

So, Katietron, I can't wait till your guts fully heal. When they do, your first iced mocha is on me, buddy.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

Shawn on: **Shawn’s Sick Days in 2010: 8** Shawn’s book Decker’s Daily Coffee

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