Domino Effect

July 29, 2015 By Aundaray Guess

As I write this blog I'm flinching from pain. Just a few days ago I was discharged from the hospital after having a voluntary surgery completed on my right upper quad muscle. The procedure called for the doctor to open my leg, take the quad which had collapsed and re-stretch it back into shape with the goal of obtaining not all, but most of my range of motion. So what does this have to do with a blog about HIV? Everything as it highlights the domino effect of becoming resistant to your HIV mediation.

My downward spiral has been documented in my previous postings as I sounded the alarm on how not to become resistant to your HIV medication. Rather than come from a scholarly direction, I instead shared my personal experience of becoming resistant to my medications.

Simply put, I wasn't taking the prescribed medication as I was supposed to. Instead I chose to take it when I 'felt like it' and most of the time I didn't feel like it. It was more than a drug holiday, it was a refusal to comply. About the only time I would take them consistently was when I knew I had an upcoming doctor's appointment and he would be looking at my viral load and t-cell numbers.

This may work in science fiction but in real life, your body is completely aware of your behaviors and it seems the HIV virus is even smarter as my inconsistency of my meds provided a window for the virus to build up a protection and make the drugs I was taking no longer effective.

The kicker is that I started out not wanting to take HIV medications, but now the choice was no longer mine based on my resistance. In fact the only option was an injectable medication named Fuzion. So I went from the simple choice of easily swallowing several pills a day to the hard choice of pushing a needle into my body, twice a day.

This is where the domino effect begins as often our body no longer has the assistance of medication to keep the HIV at bay. One thing leads to another which leads to another. A cold may lead into a flu which may lead into a more serious matter. A twisted chain reaction. For myself my domino effect was injecting myself with a needle into a muscle that didn't quite like it. It was not the medication but the way I was pushing the needle into my leg. Stubbornly using the same leg when I was told not to. That led into the muscle developing a weakness which limited my range of motion. With the limited range other parts of my body had to compensate which was now throwing off the natural movement of self. And as I became aware of the falling dominoes I knew that if I didn't address the muscle damage I would be facing a lifetime of using walking devices especially as I got older.

Already my walk was being transformed, and not in a good way. People would ask why I was limping, not realizing that I had a quad muscle that was weak. A weakness which's origin began with developing a resistance to my medication. The loss of range in my leg affected other areas of my life as I could no longer go to the theater as bending my knee in a sitting position was difficult. I no longer had the ability to ride a bike or to even run. And the simple act of climbing stairs was difficult with me holding onto the handrail to go up or down.

Thankfully I have a job which allows me to not only complete the surgery but also the ability to work at home for the month it will take me to recover. I was able to stop the domino effect of all these negative actions working against me.

So for those who wonder what's on the other side of the HIV resistance wall. I will say your wish of not taking a pill is there. But just know along with that desire comes the unexpected consequences. If it's really difficult to take your HIV medication on schedule, I encourage you to talk to your doctor to find a routine that fits you and your lifestyle. I can guarantee the domino chain of events which follows drug resistance is not a game you desire to play.

Happily to share that since my reawakening I'm on a once a day regimen which has made my pill consumption so much easier and with this recent surgery I will be able to resume the full life I felt was denied me. There's no more dominos falling in my life!

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