

Farid Hussain

Pakistani, 52 years old

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I accidentally got diagnosed with Hepatitis C in Pakistan, when I tried donating blood for my mother. I was suggested a treatment that consists of 36 injections at specific intervals there. After getting my 30th injection, the doctor allowed me to travel back to Hong Kong, and advised me to complete the rest of the treatment in Hong Kong. However, when I visited the hospital here, the doctor started giving me oral medication instead of the injections. They said even though my reports are not fully negative, I was better than before. Therefore, I didn't need any more medication but I needed follow-ups. During one of my follow-ups, I was told that there's a tumor in my liver due to Hepatitis C. I was lucky enough that day to find a Pakistani boy who was accompanying his father to help me with interpretation, and the doctors said the tumor can be removed through laser and then I would be ok.

I was hospitalized for two days after my surgery and had so many difficulties communicating with the staff in the hospital as I can just speak basic Cantonese. After the discharge, on one of my follow up visits, I was told that my liver is still damaged and I would have to go through some injections in my liver to which I agreed. I had no idea why I was getting that treatment until one of my friends accompanied me to the hospital and there were university students with whom my friend spoke in Cantonese. And then I got to know that the treatment given to me was chemotherapy and I have liver cancer. After that visit, I started getting the interpreter service via phone. Even after that I had so many difficulties in communication, such as, the interpreting staff speaking a different dialect of Punjabi than the one that I understand. I had no knowledge or information about my disease and I was also very shy to ask questions.



One day fortunately, I met the staff from Health in Action for a health screening through another NGO. The staff there understood that I had concerns and I had no idea what to do next, so they invited me to their center and explained to me about my disease. The nutritionist of HIA gave me some tips to manage my diet. I explained to the staff that I was offered some treatment at the hospital, but I refused due to the cost as I cannot afford it. The staff at HIA said they would help me as much as they could and I shouldn't say no to treatment for that reason. One of the staff was assigned to help with the communication with the doctor in my next appointment. And that was the time when I got to know what the treatment offered to me was and I was explained by the staff how it works and what is the difference between “palliative care” and “target therapy”. So I decided to proceed with target therapy that the doctor offered me previously. I will be starting my treatment plan soon.

I think things could have been better in terms of communication, if I was given the interpreter from the beginning of my treatment. It would be even better to have an in-house interpreter at hospitals so that patients do not have to see a different interpreter every time for providing the interpretation. It might also help explaining the situation to the patients at their level of literacy. I really wish to see more organizations or staff serve like HIA, so that the trusted relation between the doctor and the patients can be built.

Written by: Laila Kainat