Chemotherapy Resumes and Beck's "Chemical"

I have made it over a few cancer hurdles in the last month or two.

April 22, 2021 By Robin McGee

First, I was at last able to get the surgery which converted my temporary ileostomy to a version of a permanent colostomy. With mine, I retain my neorectum and sigmoid colon (they were too fused with other organs to remove—a consequence of radiation 10 years ago). Those guts have been rerouted to a tiny external hole, which allows me to introduce soothing medications to that distal end, which is so painfully strictured. My large intestine is back in use, resulting in perfect continuity, better nutrition, and less inflammation. This arrangement is vastly easier and more comfortable than a temporary ileostomy, and 100% easier than the low anterior resection syndrome that torments those who undergo the usual ileostomy reversal.

Second, I am back to work! Most of my work can be done from home, although I will certainly be going to schools as well. I spend lots of time in phone calls and zoom meetings, and I am still working on perfecting an online project regarding social-emotional lesson plans for students. So far, so good. I will be retiring as of 30 June, so this is my last kick at the work can.

Some of you saw me on CTV's W5 on 14 March 2021. The link to the 22-minute deep dive show is here. They did an expose of the Canadian Medical Protective Association, an organization that is subsidized by taxpayers to defend doctors to the tune of $540M annually. They hold a surplus of 5 Billion dollars. Yes, you read that right—that is billions with a "B." Did you know you were paying for that?

I resumed chemotherapy this week. The same cocktail I was on before. Once again, medical bumbling continues—the requisition for my pre-treatment MRI was sent to the wrong hospital. This is the third time that has happened. I was unwilling to delay treatment until it could be rescheduled, and insisted I start back on chemotherapy. Good thing to, as my cancer blood markers have risen recently.

Lest anyone should think I am musically stuck in the 70s, today's song "Chemical" is from Beck's 2020 album Hyperspace. Done in collaboration with Pharrell Williams (of "Happy" fame), this album interestingly integrates NASA data from various space probes into surreal videos. Using Artificial Intelligence, they paired their songs with closeup images of various celestial bodies. This song illustrates Saturn and its rings (clicking on the song title will take you to the video). Although

this song is about the vicissitudes of falling in and out of love, I choose it because chemotherapy is indeed a chemical which I must “start again.”

You say that love is a chemical
Anodyne to the soul
What I really, really want to know
Is if my mind’s in control

I’m so high
Love is a chemical
I’m so high
Love is a chemical
Start it, start it again

A random thought, a memory
A tidal wave, a melody, I’m on my knees
A sudden change in everything
Don’t know when I was leaving feeling well and free
You find love’s just a fantasy
Beautiful and ugly as a life can be
And I don’t lose any sleep honestly

I’m so high
Love is a chemical
I’m so high
Love is a chemical
Start it, start it again

I can feel it minute by minute by the day
I don’t want it running all night this way
Why you got to get it on my mind this way?

Saying what I feel
What can I tell you? Don’t know
Why you have to be like that?
Alligator teardrops fall
Love is a, love is a chemical
Burning wears off like a chemical
I don’t need anyone to turn me on
I don’t need anyone, no

And when the feeling is over
There’s no explanation
Shock to the system

Infatuation
Shaped like a flower
Strange affirmation
Crown of illusion
Start it, start it again

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