

Blood pressure high? Try cycling!



At my last appointment with my Hematologist/Oncologist, my blood pressure was running a bit high. Well yeah, it always runs a bit high in the doctor's office. I didn't think it was TOO high though, something like 144/82. Nevertheless I got written up and reported to my GP, whose office called and left several messages over several days asking me to come in to have it checked again. Actually it wasn't just several days; it kept going for two weeks, at which point I figured, if I don't get these guys off my back, my blood pressure's going to be REALLY high.

I set up an appointment for Thursday morning, after my morning ride and before work. Pretty nice ride; just a little bit warmer and thought oh, cool, nice rays through the fog up on Skyline! Er, not quite, that was smoke from a fire someplace not far away. But in the photo above, taken on West Old LaHonda, that's the real thing (fog). Just the two Kevins & me, with JR off playing in the French Alps. I had hoped for a bit harder pace but not of us were up to it. Why? Because sometimes it's nice to ride at a pace you can talk, that's why. Oh, right, why did I hope for a harder pace. Figured that might help drive my blood pressure down a bit.

I was smart enough to not get coffee prior to the blood pressure test, but, alas, the first reading came up something like 151/84. I explain my "white coat syndrome" to the guy and let him know it usually takes three times to get me down to a reasonable level. He wasn't having any of that, saying if I didn't get a good reading on the 2nd try, I'd be sent to this room where I lie down and get automated readings over a 15 minute period of time. Forcing me to relax I guess, but the thought of being forced to relax and being late for work wasn't very relaxing. This 2nd time has got to work. Talk about performance anxiety! But somehow I managed to get it right; 129/80. A passing grade.

I've got a decent-quality blood pressure measuring gadget at home, and check it frequently, partly to get used to it (so I'm less stressed when getting it done at the doc's office) and partly to figure out patterns. And there's definitely a very favorable pattern associated with cycling. Good thing, because I really don't want to add blood pressure meds to the list of things I have to take already.