HEPATITIS C IS TESTING US. WE WILL NOT FAIL.

Most Hep C infections show no symptoms. Unnoticed, chronic infection can lead to liver cancer. Better testing can help. That’s our job.

You may know hepatitis C (HCV) is a serious virus that can damage the liver and lead to liver cancer.

But did you know that most people with HCV don't know they are infected?

As many as 80 percent of people with an acute HCV infection have zero symptoms, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), though most will progress to chronic hepatitis C infection.

Because so many living with HCV show so few signs of an infection, the condition may go unnoticed for decades, often until permanent damage has been done to the liver.

How can you detect a virus that rarely, outwardly shows its face?

It all starts with diagnostic tools that pinpoint the infection.

Fighting a silent killer
Hepatitis C is far more common than many people think. Approximately 71 million people worldwide are chronically infected. A significant number of those will develop chronic liver damage (also called cirrhosis) or potentially liver cancer.

There is good news.

• Tests are available to diagnose HCV infection so that treatment may be delivered or given, potential transmissions prevented and the progression to potential fatal liver disease stopped.
• Antiviral medicines can cure more than 95 percent of people with HCV, reducing the associated health risks.
• The WHO set a goal in May 2016 to eliminate HCV and hepatitis B virus (HBV) as a public health problem by 2030 through increased access to testing and treatment.

Making the WHO 2030 goal of eliminating HCV possible
Eliminating HCV could be possible by addressing these barriers:

• Opportunity: Not all patients or communities have access to the tests needed.  
  • Incomplete diagnosis: Some people who test positive for HCV antibodies do not get needed follow-up tests to identify active infection.
  
  • Treatment concerns:
  In 2015, of those 71 million persons living with chronic HCV infection globally, only 1.1 million started treatment right away.

"We're constantly searching for new ways to help improve the tests available to diagnose people living with HCV. Part of that process involves studying the barriers to access to testing that hinder eliminating this serious disease," said Gavin Cloherty, Ph.D., director of infectious disease research for Abbott's diagnostics business.

Abbott’s arsenal of diagnostic tools for eliminating HCV
Screening for HCV happens in two steps, according to the WHO.

The first is diagnostic testing for anti-HCV antibodies produced after a person is infected.
If that test is positive, the second step is to confirm an active infection with diagnostic tests such as HCV antigen or HCV RNA.

Diagnosing and treating hepatitis C infection can require several diagnostic tests:

- **Initial Testing:** To detect HCV antibodies indicating exposure.
- **Secondary Testing:** To confirm active HCV infections.
- **Genotyping:** To guide the selection of appropriate treatment.
- **Monitoring:** To monitor response to HCV treatment.

In addition, Abbott has developed software to help healthcare professionals decide the next steps based upon the latest testing guidelines or test results.

Researchers are developing better tools for diagnosing hepatitis. Abbott has a broad range of tests to help with HCV elimination efforts: For example, the company’s SD BIOLINE HCV test can screen for HCV in minutes. If the SD BIOLINE HCV test is positive, doctors can order an additional diagnostic test, such as Abbott’s HCV core antigen test (available outside of the U.S.) on the same patient sample to confirm active infection, which takes less than 40 minutes.

This new technology is helping save lives. Consider what’s happening in the Republic of Georgia, where 150,000 people are infected with hepatitis C.

In 2015, the Georgian National Center for Disease Control, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Abbott and Gilead Sciences started researching the best ways to screen and treat patients. After the first year of the program, about 20,000 people completed treatment. About 85 percent of them were completely cured.

Another program that helps further the capabilities of many of Abbott’s diagnostics tools is the company’s Global Surveillance Program, built on a one-of-a-kind collection of clinical samples that have been screened for HIV and hepatitis virus strains from around the world. It includes more than 70,000 clinical samples collected from 40 countries on six continents.

“We rely on our Global Viral Surveillance Program, which has monitored and tracked new HIV and hepatitis viral strains around the world for more than two decades, to ensure our diagnostic tests can detect new strains of these viruses,” added Dr. Cloherty. “Any time a new strain is discovered, we confirm our current blood screening and diagnostic tests can detect it and then update our technology as needed.”

**The goal of eliminating HCV: What you need to know**

Because HCV is a silent infection, the most important step in the battle against HCV is being tested to learn if you have been infected with the virus. Ask your doctor if getting tested for HCV is right for you. Detection and treatment make it possible to achieve the WHO goal and eliminate new HCV infections by 2030.

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**Myth: There is only one type of viral hepatitis**

**Truth:** There are five hepatitis viruses. Hepatitis B and C viruses more commonly lead to chronic infections and are the most frequent causes of liver damage (also called cirrhosis) and liver cancer.1 Viral hepatitis B and C are major health challenges, affecting 325 million people globally.2 1. What is hepatitis? World Health Organization (WHO). http://www.who.int/features/qa/76/en/ 2. World Hepatitis Day: Test. Treat. Hepatitis. WHO. http://www.who.int/hepatitis/en/

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**Myth:** The only way people become infected with hepatitis is by using drugs.

**Truth:** Hepatitis can be contracted in various ways. Hepatitis B, C and D can be contracted via infected bodily fluids through shared drug needles, sexual transmission, unscreened blood transfusions and non-sterilized medical equipment.1 Hepatitis A and E can be contracted by ingesting contaminated food or water.1 1. What is hepatitis? World Health Organization. http://www.who.int/features/qa/76/en/
Myth: Hepatitis C is spread from mother to baby through breast milk
Truth: Hepatitis C is not spread through breast milk, water, food or skin-to-skin contact. Hepatitis C virus is mostly transmitted through exposure to infected blood.

Myth: There isn’t a vaccine for viral hepatitis
Truth: Vaccines exist for hepatitis A and B. The hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for children 12 months or older; travelers to certain countries; and people at high risk for infection. The hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for several demographics, including infants, starting with the first dose of hepatitis B vaccine at birth. It’s recommended to anyone who simply wants protection from the hepatitis B virus.