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

You may know hepatitis B and C (HBV and HCV) are serious viral infections that can damage the liver and lead to liver cancer.

But did you know that most people with HBV and HCV aren’t aware that they are infected?

As many as 91% of people with HBV and 80% of people with HCV don’t know they’re infected, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

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

How can you detect viruses that rarely, outwardly show their faces?

It all starts with diagnostic tools that pinpoint the infections.

Fighting silent killers

Hepatitis B and C are far more common than many people think. Around the world, approximately 257 million people are living with chronic HBV infection and 71 million people are living with chronic HCV infection. 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 HBV and HCV infection so that treatment can be provided, potential transmissions prevented and the progression to fatal liver disease stopped.
• Antiviral medicines for HBV can slow the progression of cirrhosis, reduce the chance of liver cancer and improve long-term survival.
• Antiviral medicines can cure more than 95% of people with HCV, reducing the associated health risks.
• In May 2016, the WHO set a goal to eliminate HCV and HBV as a public health threat by 2030 through increased access to testing and treatment.

Making the WHO 2030 goal possible

Combining testing and treatment efforts to combat hepatitis makes ending the epidemic feasible:

• Access to diagnostics: Not all people or communities have access to the tests needed.
• Incomplete diagnosis: Some people who test positive for hepatitis antibodies do not get needed follow-up tests to confirm active infection.
• Treatment availability: In 2015, of those living with chronic infections globally, only a small portion received treatment. For HBV, 1.7 million people were on treatment, and for HCV, 2.86 million people were on treatment.

"We're constantly searching for new ways to help improve the tests available to diagnose people living with viral hepatitis. Part of that process involves studying the barriers to access testing that hinders eliminating the epidemic," said Gavin Cloherty, Ph.D., director of infectious disease research for our diagnostics business.

Our arsenal of diagnostic tools for eliminating the epidemic
According to the WHO, chronic HBV infection is diagnosed when the hepatitis B surface antigen, HBsAg, is persistent for at least six months. The persistence of HBsAg suggests there’s a risk for developing chronic liver disease and liver cancer later in life.

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.

We have a range of hepatitis tests that can be used in several different settings – from remote areas in Africa to managing treatments in large cities in the U.S. and Europe. We recently received CE Mark for the world’s most sensitive and easy-to-use hepatitis B rapid diagnostic test. We also have a hepatitis C rapid test that can be used as a screening tool to identify people who have been exposed to the virus plus a molecular viral load and core lab antigen tests for confirmation. These tests may help make linkage to treatment and care more accessible for millions of people living with hepatitis.

And for those people living with chronic HBV or HCV infections, doctors use molecular testing to see how they’re responding to treatment. Our RealTie® HBV and HCV tests can help doctors monitor response to treatment. In settings that don’t have access to molecular testing, the ARCHITECT® HCV antigen test can also help assess response to treatment.

**Eliminating hepatitis as a public health threat: What you need to know**

Because HBV and HCV are often silent infections, the most important step in the battle against this epidemic is being tested to learn if you have been infected with these viruses. Ask your doctor if getting tested is right for you. Detection and treatment make it possible to achieve the WHO goals for eliminating HBV and HCV by 2030.

Infographic: Understanding Hepatitis