

# FAST FACTS

*A message for health care providers*

## July 28, 2013 is World Hepatitis Day

July 28<sup>th</sup> is the birthday of Dr. Baruch Blumberg who discovered the hepatitis B virus in 1967. Two years later he developed the first hepatitis B vaccine, and for these achievements, won the Nobel Prize.

### The Problem:

- Viral hepatitis is the leading cause of cirrhosis and liver cancer worldwide. Approximately 1 in 12 persons, or ~500 million people, have chronic viral hepatitis and most are unaware they are infected.

### New Testing Recommendation for Hepatitis C:

- **CDC recommends testing for Hepatitis C anyone born from 1945 through 1965 (baby boomers).**
- More than 75% of adults infected with Hep C are baby boomers and are unaware of their status.
- Many baby boomers could have been infected from contaminated blood and blood products before widespread blood supply screening began in 1992 and universal precautions were adopted. Others may have become infected from injecting drugs, even if only once in the past. Many baby boomers do not know how or when they were infected.
- Liver disease, liver cancer, and deaths from Hep C are increasing.
- Treatments are available that can eliminate the virus from the body and prevent liver damage, cirrhosis, and even liver cancer.
- Health care providers should screen and confirm active HCV infection and refer patients who need treatment to treatment specialists.

### Changes in HCV Testing Technologies

Since the 2003 guidance was published, there have been 2 developments with important implications for HCV testing: For detailed info go to <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6218a5.htm>.

1. Availability of a CLIA-waived, rapid HCV antibody test. The OraQuick HCV Rapid Antibody Test (OraSure Technologies) is a CLIA-waived, rapid assay for HCV antibody screening in fingerstick capillary blood and venipuncture whole blood. Its performance is similar to other FDA-approved, laboratory HCV antibody assays and permits testing outside the clinical laboratory.
2. Confirming HCV antibody positive test with a test to detect HCV viral RNA. The Chiron RIBA HCV 3.0 Strip Immunoblot Assay (Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics) that was recommended for supplemental testing of blood samples after initial HCV antibody testing is no longer available. Currently, the only FDA-approved HCV confirmatory tests detect HCV viral RNA.

### Resources:

- MMWR Testing for HCV Infection: An Update of Guidance for Clinicians and Laboratorians - <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6218a5.htm>
- Hepatitis C Information for Health Professionals - <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HCV/Management.htm>
- AAFP Hepatitis C: Diagnosis and Treatment - <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2010/0601/p1351.html>
- The A, B, Cs of Viral Hepatitis - <http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/hepatitis/>