



spotlight on **HEP C** STAT!

Protecting Yourself From A Common Disease

(NAPSA)—A simple test can help diagnose the most common type of blood-borne virus in the U.S. Yet more than 70 percent of those infected do not know they have the disease.

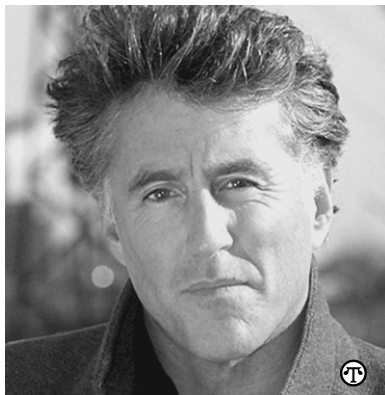
The condition is hepatitis C. The viral infection, which is four times more prevalent than HIV, attacks the liver and can be life threatening if left untreated. Because years can pass before symptoms occur, an estimated 2.8 million people with the virus have not yet been diagnosed.

Christopher Kennedy Lawford—author, actor, and nephew of President John F. Kennedy—was among those living with undiagnosed hepatitis C. The virus attacked his liver for 15 years before being detected.

“I had no idea that hepatitis C was something I should be concerned about,” said Lawford, known for his roles on “General Hospital” and “All My Children.” “I didn’t know enough about the disease to ask my doctor for a test. I felt healthy and had no symptoms.”

In 2001, Lawford finally went to his doctor for routine tests. His doctor was familiar with Lawford’s history of alcohol and drug abuse and recommended a hepatitis C test. Lawford was shocked when he tested positive for the virus.

“Many in my generation who engaged in adventuresome behavior, perhaps 20 years ago and maybe even just once, may not



Christopher Kennedy Lawford helps raise awareness of hepatitis C through an educational campaign called Hep C—STAT! For more information, visit www.HepCSTAT.com. (HarperCollins)

know that these activities leave them at risk for hepatitis C today,” he explained.

Lawford underwent treatment for the virus and is hepatitis C free today. In an effort to educate others on the importance of testing for and treating the disease, Lawford is sharing his story as part of the Hep C—STAT! (Stop, Test And Treat) educational campaign. The initiative encourages Americans to stop and assess their potential exposure to hepatitis C, get tested for the disease, and seek a referral to a liver specialist—such as a gastroenterologist or hepatologist—for treatment.

The following activities may

potentially expose individuals to the hepatitis C virus:

- Blood transfusions or major surgery in the U.S. prior to 1992;
- Illicit injection drug use;
- Health care worker or other professional occupational accidents (war veterans, particularly those who served in Vietnam, are recognized to be at higher risk);
- Needlestick accidents among health care workers;
- Intranasal drug use through the sharing of straws or other instruments;
- Getting tattoos in unsanitary conditions;
- Sharing certain personal care items (razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers or nail files); or
- Blood-to-blood contact during sexual activity.

Donald Jensen, M.D., a leading hepatologist at the University of Chicago Hospital, is also playing a role in the Hep C—STAT! campaign. He says he sees firsthand the devastating impact of this disease.

“It is my hope that people who have one of the risk factors of hepatitis C will ask their physicians for a test,” said Dr. Jensen. “Additionally, I hope to encourage those who have hepatitis C to speak with a liver specialist about whether treatment is right for them.”

For more information about hepatitis C, visit the Web site www.HepCSTAT.com.