NASCAR Legend Will Rodgers and OraSure Race to End Hepatitis C

Will Rodgers survived a rare liver disease; OraSure makes rapid tests for hepatitis C, a virus that can cause liver failure.

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Race car icon Will Rodgers and OraSure Technologies have teamed up to raise awareness of hepatitis C, a virus that causes inflammation of the liver and can lead to serious and lifelong health issues. Notably, attendees will have the opportunity to get tested for hep C trackside at educational events held during races. OraSure will provide the tests, which are free and show results in 20 minutes.

Anyone who tests positive for the virus will be connected to care. In the vast majority of cases, hepatitis C can be cured by taking daily tablets for eight to 24 weeks. (For more details, see Hep's Basics on Hepatitis C Treatment.)

Rodgers has firsthand experience with liver disease and hepatitis C. As a child, he was diagnosed with primary sclerosing cholangitis, a rare liver illness. In overcoming this health challenge, he became dedicated to advocating for those with liver disease and raising awareness of liver health. He started the Will Rodgers Liver Health Foundation in 2020, which this summer teamed with OraSure to launch the Race to End Hep C campaign.

"I know the toll liver disease can have on your body, especially if it's left untreated," Rodgers said in an OraSure press release about the campaign. "This terrible disease, which affects so many in the United States, is a significant strain on our health care system and could be eradicated through broad-scale testing initiatives. I'm very proud to work with OraSure to drive increased awareness around HCV and provide testing services to underserved communities across the country."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that nearly 2.4 million people in the United States have hepatitis C virus (HCV) but that nearly half of them don't know it. What's more, as the Race to End Hep C website points out, liver disease is one of the top 10 causes of death in the nation.

"At OraSure, we take public health seriously and have played a significant role in combating

diseases such as HCV, HIV and COVID-19 on a global basis," said OraSure president and CEO Stephen Tang, PhD, in the press release. "Our OraQuick HCV rapid antibody test is designed to be extremely simple to use [and] highly accurate and provides a result within 20 minutes, while simultaneously being cost effective.

"As a company," Tang continued, "we are extremely proud to collaborate with the Will Rodgers Liver Health Foundation to drive greater awareness around the importance of individuals knowing their HCV status. A simple test can save a life."

Indeed, without diagnosis and treatment, hepatitis C can lead to cirrhosis (or scarring) of the liver and liver cancer. For more details, check out Hep's Basics on Hepatitis C as well as the Introduction to Hepatitis, which includes details about hep A and B and other liver diseases, such as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) and non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH).

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