



Understanding Hepatitis (Understanding Health and Sickness Series)

M.D. James L. Achord

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Hepatitis, or inflammation of the liver, has many causes, including several viruses, a host of chemicals and drugs, bacteria, diseases of the immune system, inherited factors, and herbs.

For most of the population "hepatitis" refers to a disease caused by viruses, and viral hepatitis is the major concern of this book. However many of the nonviral types also are mentioned.

Every year, about 140,000 new cases of hepatitis A occur in the United States, and perhaps over a million around the world. Because some who are infected do not become ill, the statistics are perhaps ten times greater than the number recognized. Fortunately, this strain is not chronic (defined as disease that lasts longer than six months). Hepatitis B infects about 1,250,000 in the U.S. and about 350,000,000 worldwide. Hepatitis C, unique in many ways and virtually always chronic, has produced some 4,000,000 cases in the U.S. About 1.6 percent of the population has been infected at some time, and at least seventy-five percent in this group retain the live virus in their blood. A fourth virus, hepatitis D, is uncommon in the United States.

Because viral hepatitis sometimes has serious acute and chronic consequences, reference to it often tends to raise unreasonable fears of death or disability. However, the majority who become infected suffer few complications or long-term effects. The infection rate has decreased dramatically in recent years.

In comprehensible terms *Understanding Hepatitis* furnishes the reader with a better grasp of the disease. Featured in this book are a historical overview, a discussion of symptoms and treatment, and a report on current research. This information not only debunks fearful myths but also provides helpful particulars on how to avoid the risks for contracting hepatitis.

James L. Achord, a professor emeritus at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, has published articles in such publications as *Conn's Current Therapy*, *Gastroenterology and Hepatology: Pearls of Wisdom*, and *Clinical Medicine*.

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