Roche Diagnostics’
Dr. Lazarus commits
to improving HIV
testing

Benefits of early HIV diagnosis
During acute infection, the time immediately following initial infection, an individual with HIV has tremendously high amounts of virus (viral load) in the blood. These individuals are extremely infectious; in fact, a large majority of HIV infections is transmitted during this acute phase. High viral load and a person’s lack of knowledge about his HIV infection make a dangerous combination. Additionally, early therapeutic intervention upon diagnosis may also improve the individual patient’s long-term management of HIV and help delay the onset of AIDS.

Making HIV testing routine
Routine HIV testing can help diagnose patients earlier in the course of their HIV infections. Risk-based screening strategies may not be optimal because it is difficult for patients to admit to physicians that they have had unprotected sex and/or have used intravenous drugs.

Innovations in HIV testing
We are committed to continuing to bring to market new, innovative tests and reagents that help laboratories support physicians in diagnosis and treatment. Recently, we announced an updated system, the COBAS AmpliPrep/COBAS AMPLICOR HIV-1 MONITOR Test version 1.5. This is the first PCR-based test offering fully automated specimen preparation followed by fully automated amplification and quantification of HIV-1 RNA for viral-load monitoring. The power of automation for the specimen-preparation process yields enhanced operational efficiencies for laboratories that use PCR-based diagnostic tests for the quantification of HIV RNA.

On the horizon
Diagnosing HIV during the acute infection stage with sensitive methods that directly detect the virus’s genetic material should help curb the HIV/AIDS epidemic here in the United States and abroad. We can also look forward to new tests that improve the laboratory’s workflow and help produce accurate and timely results.

Laboratory science careers
Throughout the nation, laboratory directors are experiencing difficulty finding and retaining qualified laboratory technologists. This is a great field that offers long-term opportunities to work with cutting-edge products and technologies and improve patient care. ☐