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Eight in 10 inpatients refuse HIV screening

PUBLIC hospitals, since 2008, offer routine screening for HIV, but their patients do not seem to want it.

A recent study by Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) found that eight in 10 inpatients refused to get tested for the immunodeficiency virus that causes Aids.

The top reasons they gave were that they were unlikely to be infected because they were old, they

feared needles, and they could not afford it.

While not surprising, this reluctance signalled an obvious stigma of the disease, said Dr Arlene Chua, an infectious diseases specialist at TTSH who led the study published in scientific journal *PLoS ONE* last month.

The study polled all inpatients aged 21 and older admitted to TTSH between 2009 and 2010 who quali-

fied for the test – that is, they could not be in intensive care, have mental illness, be already HIV-positive, or have been tested in the last six months.

Some 79% of the 41,543 patients eligible said “no” to the test. Of the 21% who said “yes”, 16 people were discovered to be HIV-positive. – The Straits Times / Asia News Network