

# HIV testing in Clinical Center of Vojvodina, Serbia

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## Introduction

- Serbia is a low prevalence country, but also a country with poor testing rates of only 7.7 tested per 100000 population.
- Low testing rates cause late presentations and hospitalizations in different clinics before the HIV positive status is established.
- There was a concern that even symptomatic patients go through the Clinical center undiagnosed, and although the number of these patients is probably low, this can be avoided
- In Serbia there's a prerequisite for a written consent to test for HIV which might put off some patients and/or physicians to test for HIV

## Objectives

- To find out the most frequent indications for physicians to test their patients for HIV
- To find out the frequency of testing on different clinics
- To understand the reasons not to test for HIV in different clinics and in different physicians age groups

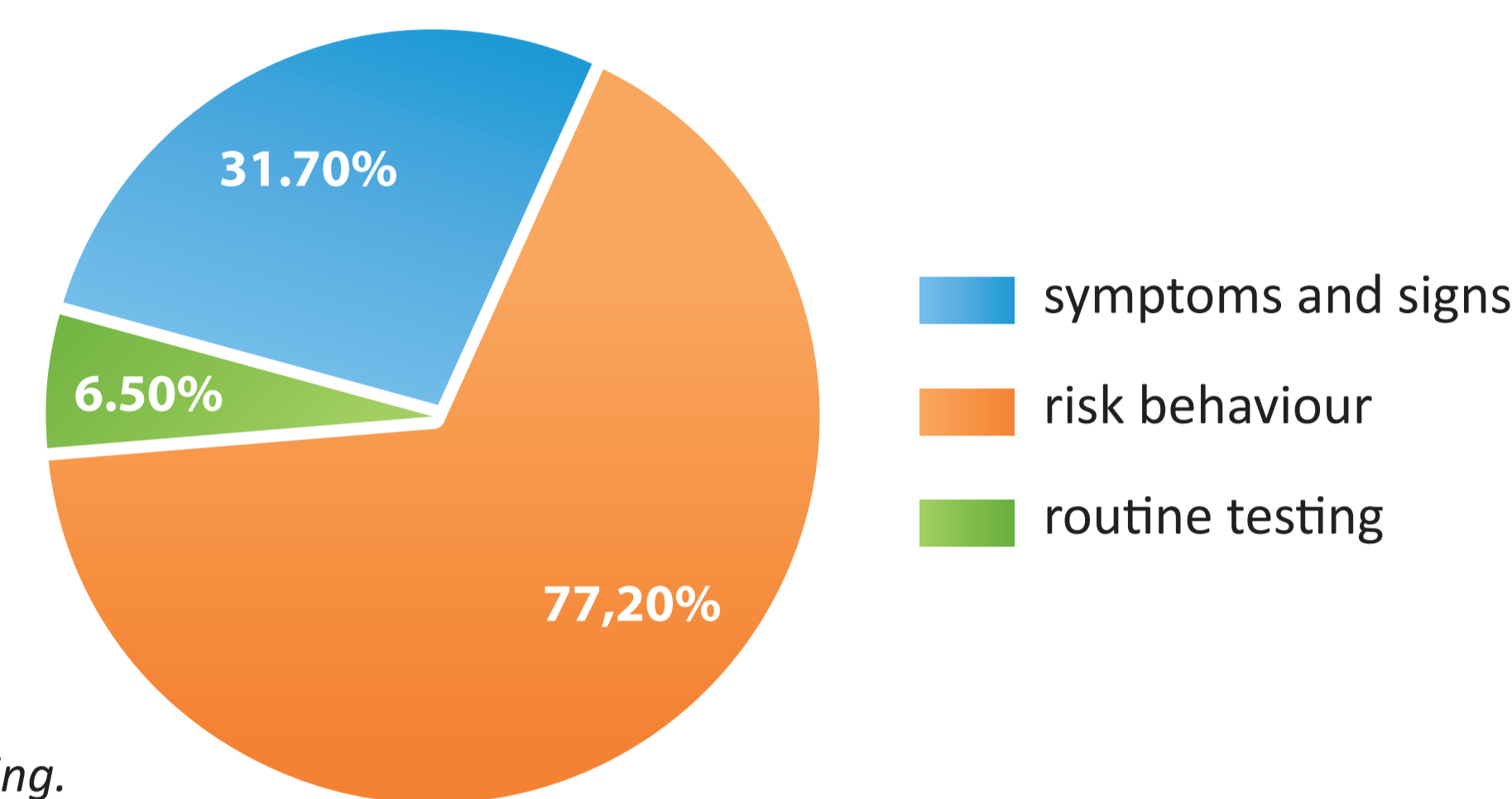
## Materials

- The survey was conducted in November 2011.
- The study was in a form of a cross sectional short questionnaire in Clinical center of Vojvodina, Northern province of Serbia
- Physicians from six clinics were included: Internal medicine, Neurology, Psychiatry, Dermatology, Infectious diseases and Gynecology and Obstetrics clinic.

## Results

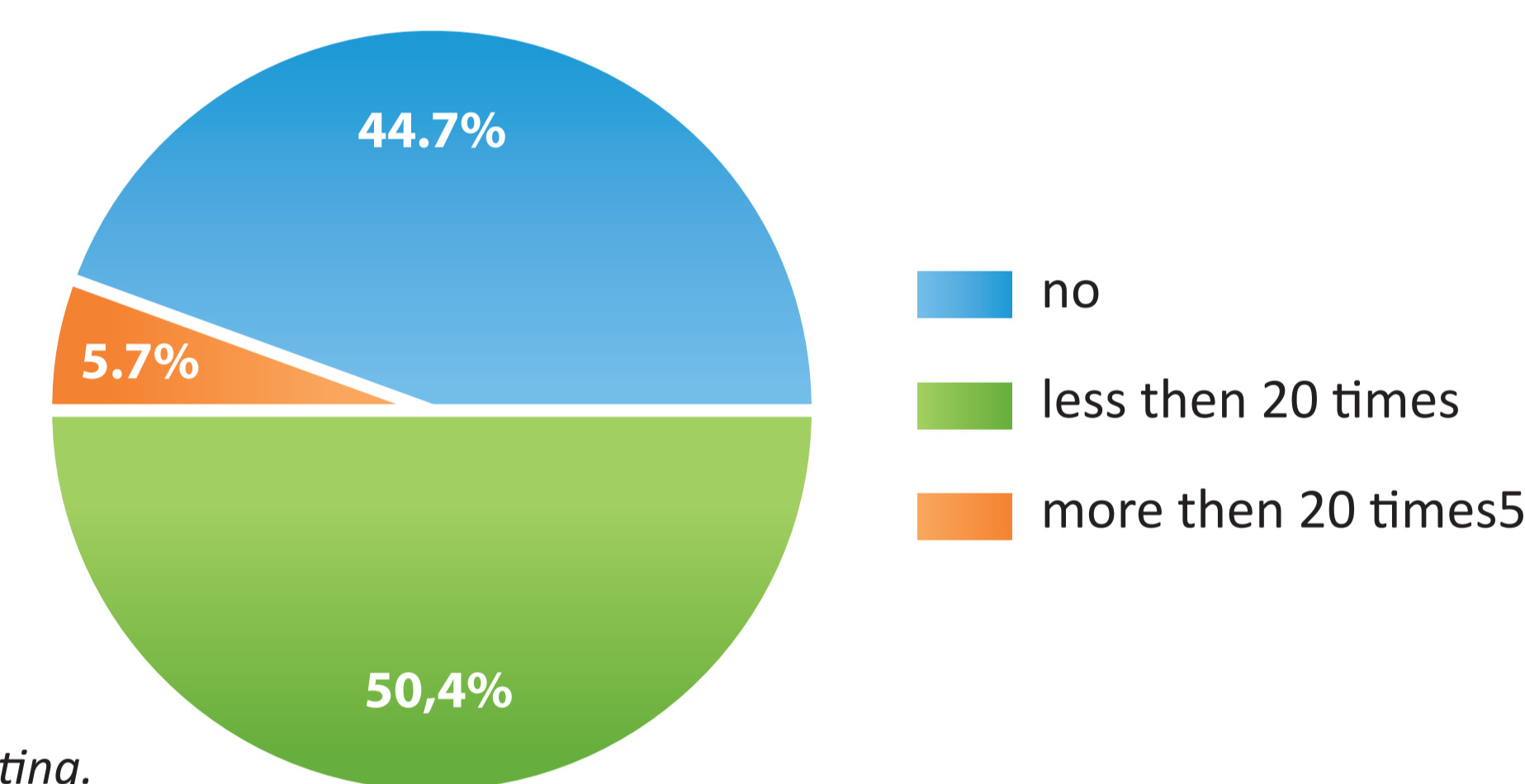
A total of 124 physicians were surveyed, medium age 43,5, mostly females (70%); the structure of participants was similar in all six clinics.

- The main indications for offering HIV test is shown on Graph 1.



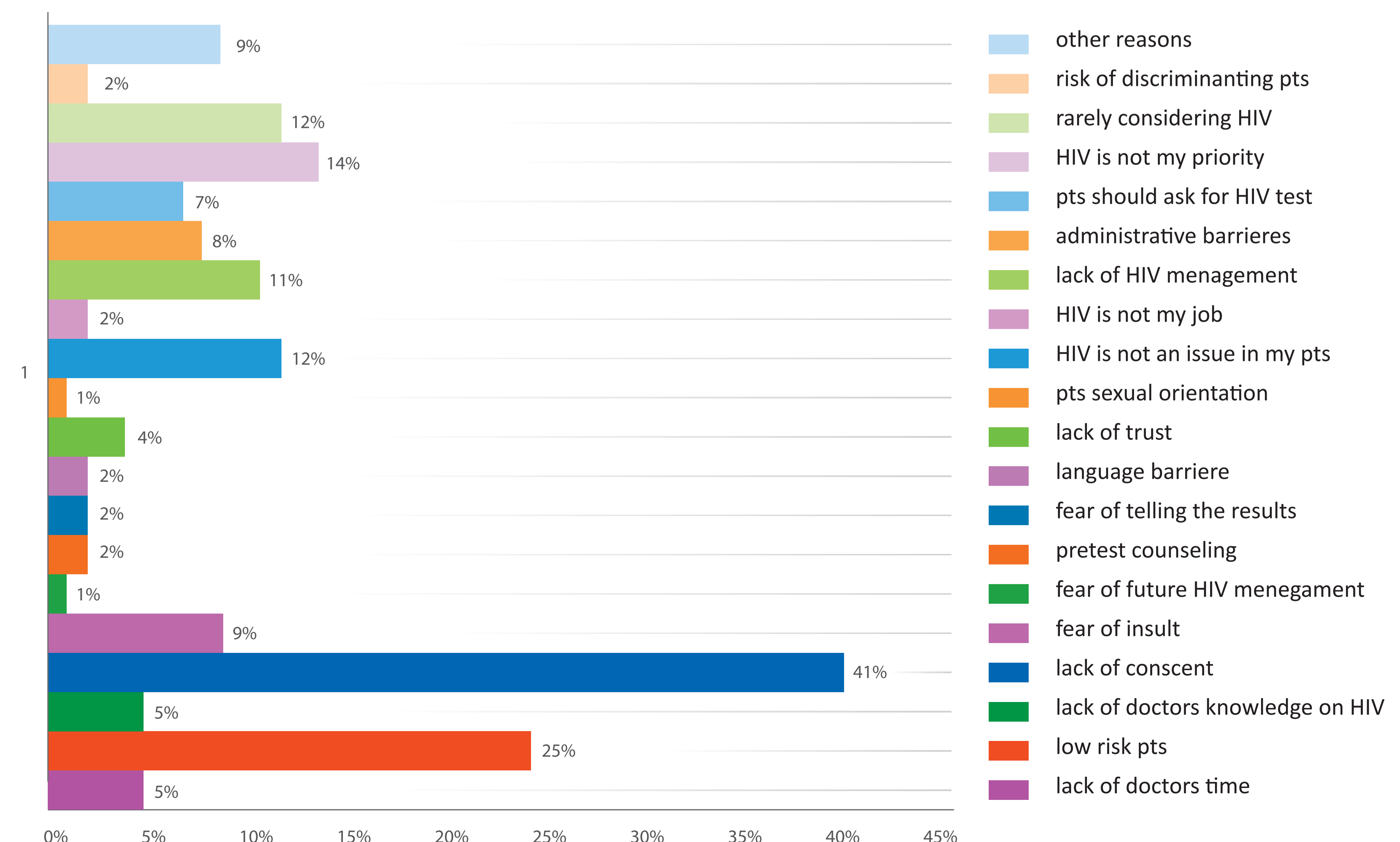
Graph 1. Reasons for testing.

- Half of the doctors see mandatory patients' consent as an obstacle to test (48,8%).
- Frequency of testing in it the last 12 months is shown in Graph 2.



Graph 2. Frequency of testing.

- The specific reasons for not testing are represented in the Graph 3.
- In dermatology, neurology, internal medicine and psychiatric clinic the main reason for not testing was their perception of low risk population of patients (50%, 32%, 27%, 35% respectively).
- Gynecology and obstetrics clinic doctors admitted they don't prioritize HIV testing in their everyday work (29%) and rarely think of that test (24%).
- Compared to older physicians younger physicians (39 and younger) were more likely to blame the lack of time and believe HIV is not their responsibility ( $p < 0.001$ ;  $p < 0.05$ )



## Conclusion

Physicians in the Clinical Center of Vojvodina are aware of the indications to test for HIV

- Prerequisite patients' consent is a major obstacle to test
- The frequency of testing is mostly satisfactory, but needs improvement especially in the Gynecology and Obstetrics' Clinic
- According to the results of the survey and contrary to previous publications, patients frequently decline HIV testing
- Risk of discrimination and patients' sexual orientation are not obstacles to test
- More education for pretest counseling is needed, especially for young physicians.

## References

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