

H A R L A N   R I C H A R D S

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A Good Idea From HSU

Generally, when something changes in prison, it changes for the worse. Year after year, rules get more stringent, more control is exerted and fewer privileges are allowed. It seems that prison officials sit back and try to think up ways to make things harsher than they already are.

But the folks in charge of Health Services Unit (HSU) adopted a new policy which seems to make sense to me. I was called to HSU for my annual TB test. I've been getting tested annually for over 30 years and have never had a positive test result. It seems an incredible waste of time and money to keep testing me every year, especially when there have been no cases of TB in the prison system.

The new protocol requires a nurse to ask the same series of questions to determine whether I have had any TB symptoms or been exposed to anyone with TB. If I answer "no" to all the questions, it stops there. There is no need for a TB test. I don't know how much a TB test costs, but it makes sense to only test those who need to be tested based on risk factors identified by answering the questions. The new procedure saves money and relieves me from having to endure an annoying annual ritual.