Fifty HIV-positive and 50 HIV-negative women are still needed for participation in a bone density clinical study through UCSD.

“HIV negative women aren’t hard to find,” said Ricardo Olivo, outreach coordinator for San Diego’s EXPORT Center. “HIV-positive women are the most challenging to identify…because of the social stigma and confidentiality issue.”

The study is confidential for people interested in participating, Olivo said.

The study will measure the bone density and body composition of female participants 18 years of age or older. The study will compare bone density in both HIV-positive and HIV-negative women to identify the risk of osteopenia, the thinning and weakening of the bones. Osteopenia, the beginning stages of osteoporosis, leaves people at greater risk for obtaining fractures.

“Osteopenia is a clinically silent disease usually until one of your bones fracture” said Jeannie Huang, the principal investigator for the study. “It [the study] is like going in for early cancer detection—screenings will help you to do something early on.”

Huang said recent studies show a high number of HIV-positive men suffering from low bone density, something that is generally thought to primarily affect women.

“At the beginning of the HIV epidemic, no one had the luxury to consider the long-term health effects of the disease,” said Huang. “Now, with the medication that is available, people are living longer and they need to consider these effects.”

Osteoporosis is being detected in more women who are in their 30s and 40s, said Huang.

In the last decade, osteopenia and osteoporosis have doubles in women over the age of 50, according to a report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC also sponsors a national bone health campaign for girls over the age of 12.

Recruiting for the study will continue until the 100 women have participated. After the trial, 50 HIV-positive women will be able to participate in a treatment study for low bone density.

After the bone density and body composition reports, information can be released to the participant’s primary care physician.

Women interested in participating in the study can contact Jeannie Huang at (619) 543-7544 or Ricardo Olivo at (619) 981-1622.