

## Possible cure for 'untreatable' liver disease found

A liver disease thought to be medically untreatable can likely be tackled using a cheap drug prescribed for certain hormonal disorders, researchers have found.

A recently published study by researchers from Duke-NUS Medical School found that 20 patients who suffer from non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) saw significant improvements in their condition after being administered small doses of the drug over four months, in a clinical trial.

It is estimated that more than 30

per cent of Singaporeans have NAFLD.

While there is still a long way to go before this option can be used for regular treatment, researchers are confident that it holds promise.

NAFLD is caused by the accumulation of excess fat in the liver that is not attributed to heavy drinking.

If left untreated, an estimated 4 per cent of patients can suffer from liver scarring, which can result in liver failure and cancer.

The only way to treat the disease currently is through lifestyle

changes, said Dr Eveline Bruinroop, a research fellow at Duke-NUS who worked on the study.

Patients are usually advised to reduce their consumption of sweet beverages and food with high calories, and exercise for 50 minutes three times a week, a regime that many find hard to stick to, she said.

With rising obesity levels, more Singaporeans are at risk of getting the disease. A study published last year suggested that there is a rise in incidence of the disease in Singapore. - **LOW DE WEI**