Oops!

Misdiagnosed men sue

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If you were misdiagnosed as HIV positive, what would you do—jump for joy or sue? Two clinically misunderstood men have chosen the latter.

Mark Savage, 43 and from Ohio, lived with HIV for six years. He took AZT daily and accepted side effects like depression as par for the course—until 1996, when a doctor, intrigued by his lack of HIV-related symptoms, rediagnosed him as HIV-free. Now, Savage is suing David Blatt, the Chicago MD who delivered the diagnosis in 1990, allegedly without doing an HIV test. Savage's suit seeks $50,000, mainly, said his lawyer, "for the pain of believing he was going to die of AIDS."

North of the border, Ronald W., 45, also suffered from what docs diagnosed as AIDS—but turned out to be emphysema. In 1994, when the Quebecker, a smoker, saw a doc about his cough, he was told he had HIV. For three years specialists blamed his lung and skin problems on the virus. One even discouraged him from giving up the stick, telling him to enjoy the time he had left. In 1997, a doctor noticed that W.'s "HIV" hadn't progressed. A second blood test came out negative. W. sued three of the MDs and hung a $102,000 price tag on his mental anguish.

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