Charlie Sheen: I Have HIV, Am Undetectable and Paid $10M in Shakedowns

November 17, 2015

In a revealing interview on *Today*, actor Charlie Sheen said he is HIV positive and that he was making the announcement to help fight the stigma of HIV, and to end smear campaigns against him and "shakedowns" for money.

Sheen appeared in three Today segments with Matt Lauer, including one with Sheen's doctor, Robert Huizenga of the University of California, Los Angeles. Huizenga clarified that Sheen has HIV—not AIDS—and that Sheen is undetectable and on a successful regimen of four pills a day.

Huizenga stressed that Sheen's major health issues weren't the HIV itself, but rather the substance abuse and depression related to his HIV diagnosis.

Sheen said he has known of his diagnosis for about four years, and that it was "impossible" that he knowingly transmitted the virus through unprotected sex. He clarified that he has had unprotected sex with two people since learning of his status. Both people, Sheen said, knew he had HIV and were also under the care of his doctor.

Lauer pointed out that in several states, if you are HIV positive and have sex without disclosing, you can be charged with a crime. "I completely understand and respect that," Sheen responded, "but having divulged that is the reason I'm in the mess that I'm in, with all the shakedowns."

Lauer said Sheen has paid upward of $10 million in the past years as a result of lawsuits and shakedowns. Sheen clarified that none of the lawsuits were for passing the virus to another person, but that he expects to face a series of lawsuits in the future. "I'm sure that's next," he said.

When Sheen spoke about the support and criticism he's facing, especially on social media, the actor said, "I'm gonna ride this wave of support. If there's one guy on this planet to contract this that's going to deliver a cure, it's me. Seriously.

"I'm not going to be the poster man for this," Sheen continued, "but I will not shun away from

responsibilities and opportunities that drive me to help others."

In an open letter from Sheen posted on the Today show'd website, the actor writes:

I accept this condition not as a curse or scourge, but rather as an opportunity and a challenge. An opportunity to help others. A challenge to better myself.

Every day, of every month, of every year, countless individuals go to work, man their stations, fulfill their professional obligations with a host of disabilities. Diseases, imperfections, hurdles, detours. These maladies range from lupus to cancer, from paralysis to blindness, from diabetes to obesity. "Treated," HIV is no different.

For a related article, read the POZ opinion piece "Things You Should Know Before Discussing Charlie Sheen's HIV Status," by Scott Schoettes, the senior attorney and HIV Project national director of Lambda Legal.

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