Charlie Sheen’s HIV Disclosure Led to Spike in Home Testing Kit Sales

This finding follows a previous study that found that his “Today” show appearance caused a surge in internet searches for information on HIV.

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Charlie Sheen’s live television announcement that he was living with HIV caused a spike in sales of home testing kits for the virus, Live Science reports. This finding about the effects of the actor’s November 2015 Today show appearance follows a previous study, conducted by the same research team, that found that his disclosure corresponded with millions of internet searches for information on HIV prevention and testing.

Publishing their findings in Prevention Science, researchers examined weekly sales of OraQuick, the only home testing HIV kit available in the United States.

The week of Sheen’s Today show appearance, OraQuick sales doubled and reached an all-time high, rising from about 3,500 to 7,000 kits. Sales remained above average for the following three weeks. All told, an additional 8,225 kits that would normally be expected were sold.

The investigators were encouraged to find that the initial signs of interest in HIV testing, which they identified quickly through internet search data, ultimately led to individuals seeking out testing. Going forward, such rapidly available “big media data” could help public health officials respond to emerging trends more expeditiously.

To read the Live Science article, click here.

To read a press release about the study, click here.

To read the study, click here.

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