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## **A doctor who's not licensed to practice medicine in the US but is now treating Charlie Sheen's HIV reportedly injected himself with the actor's blood**

By Tanya Lewis | January 12, 2016

Actor Charlie Sheen, who went on NBC's "Today" show last November to confirm rumors that he was HIV-positive, now claims he is no longer taking his HIV medications and is seeking alternative treatment in Mexico, People magazine is reporting.

According to People, the actor announced on "The Dr. Oz Show" that he had been off his meds for a week and was getting treatment from a physician named Sam Chachoua, who is not licensed to practice medicine in the US, according to the show's host Mehmet Oz.

Chachoua reportedly told Oz he was so confident in his treatment that he had injected himself with some of Sheen's blood — probably not a good idea considering that HIV is spread by direct contact with blood and certain other bodily fluids.

"I drew some blood from him and I injected myself with it and I said, 'Charlie, if I don't know what I'm doing, then we're both in trouble now aren't we?'" Chachoua reportedly told Oz by phone.

### **Sheen's diagnosis**

The National Enquirer tabloid first reported in November that Sheen had contracted the virus and that some of his sexual partners weren't aware. But Sheen maintains that he told all his partners of his HIV status, adding that many threatened to blackmail him for a sum totaling "into the millions."

At the time Sheen appeared on the Today Show last November, his physician **Robert Huizenga**, an assistant professor of clinical medicine at UCLA, said Sheen had been put on a cocktail of strong antiviral drugs, and that the HIV was undetectable in his blood.

The actor had achieved what is known in the medical community as viral suppression by taking a three-drug cocktail known as antiretroviral therapy, or ART. This is not a cure, it just means the virus has been reduced to an undetectable level in the body, where it is unable to multiply and wipe out the immune system.

Many people who take their medication consistently can achieve viral suppression in three to six months, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services.



### **No longer undetectable**

However, Sheen reportedly told Oz the virus has now returned to detectable levels.

"I'm a little off my game because right before I walked out here, I got some results I was disappointed about," he told Oz, according to People. "I had been non-detectable, non-detectable and checking the blood every week and then found out the numbers are back up."

Sheen said he does not recommend the alternative treatment he received to everyone.

His doctor, Huizenga, was also in the audience of "The Dr. Oz Show," and reportedly told Sheen, "It would just break my heart if you did anything where you threw that opportunity ... away and went back to where we were several decades ago."

As far as we know, Sheen does not have AIDS, a condition in which the virus has dramatically suppressed the immune system, leaving the patient susceptible to infections and rare types of cancer.

About 35 million people were living with HIV worldwide as of 2013, according to the World Health Organization, and about 1.5 million people died of AIDS-related illnesses that year. But thanks to antiretroviral drugs, the virus no longer has to be a death sentence for those like Sheen.

### **A 'hard 3 letters to absorb'**

On the "Today" Show in November, Sheen said he did not know how he contracted the virus. He said he had unprotected sex with two people since he learned of the HIV diagnosis and that his doctor was monitoring both of them.

Sheen said he learned he had HIV four years ago, after suffering from extreme migraines and "sweating the bed." Thinking he might have a brain tumor, he was hospitalized. But after numerous tests, doctors confirmed he had HIV.

One of the reasons HIV can go long periods before being diagnosed is that its earliest symptoms can mirror those of the flu — many people experience a fever, muscle aches, sore throat, and swollen glands. The only way to know for sure whether you have HIV is to get tested.

"It's a hard three letters to absorb," the actor said. "It's a turning point in one's life."

At the time, Sheen said he was on a "triple cocktail" of HIV medications and took four pills a day. He added that since his diagnosis he had never missed taking his medication.

His doctor said, however, that there was still a very small chance that Sheen could pass the virus to sexual partners even if he continued his treatment and used protection.