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Charlie Sheen Says He Has H.I.V. and Has Paid Millions to Keep It Secret

By EMILY STEEL | NOV. 17, 2015



The troubled television star [Charlie Sheen](#) revealed his H.I.V.-positive status on Tuesday, saying that he had paid people upward of \$10 million to keep quiet about his condition and that he wanted to put a stop “to this onslaught, this barrage of attacks and of sub-truths and very harmful and mercurial stories that are about me.”

“I am in fact H.I.V.-positive,” he said during [a live interview](#) with Matt Lauer on NBC’s “Today” show.

Mr. Sheen said that part of his goal in coming forward was to put an end to the payments he was making to keep people quiet. “I think that I release myself from this prison today,” he said.

The actor said he had known about the diagnosis for about four years but did not know how he contracted the illness. At first, he said, he thought that he had a brain tumor. “It is a hard three letters to absorb,” he said.

In a separate [open letter](#) published on Tuesday, Mr. Sheen, 50, said that the diagnosis led to “a temporary yet abysmal descent into profound substance abuse and fathomless drinking” that he called “a suicide run.”



He said that during the period he “dazedly chose (or hired) the companionship of unsavory and insipid types.”

“Regardless of their salt-less reputations, I always lead with condoms and honesty when it came to my condition,” he said. “Sadly, my truth soon became their treason, as a deluge of blackmail and extortion took center stage in this circus of deceit,” he said. He did not provide any specifics about the alleged extortion, or provide evidence of it.

Mr. Sheen asserted that it was “impossible” that he had knowingly transmitted the disease to other people. He said that he had unprotected sex with two people but that both people were informed and have been under the care of his doctor. He said he had disclosed his diagnosis to all of his sex partners.

Asked by Mr. Lauer whether he faced lawsuits, Mr. Sheen said it was more “shakedowns” from people demanding money. “For some reason, I trusted them,” he said. “They were deep in my inner circle, and I thought they could be helpful. My trust turned to their treason.”

When Mr. Lauer asked whether he was still paying some of these people, Mr. Sheen said, “Not after today, I’m not.”

Over the years, Mr. Sheen, 50, has acknowledged extensive drug use and the hiring of prostitutes. Once the highest-paid television actor, Mr. Sheen saw his personal life become the focus of global media attention in 2011 after he had a drug-fueled public meltdown, and CBS was forced to shut down production of his hit sitcom, “Two and a Half Men.”

Mr. Sheen was fired from the series, but he quickly returned with the FX comedy “Anger Management.” That series has since been canceled. Hollywood databases indicate that Mr. Sheen has no current television or movie projects.

On Tuesday, Mr. Sheen said that his financial situation was “not great,” before quickly adding that he was “a survivor.”

“I have been up, I’ve been down,” he said. “I’ve been rich. I’ve been poor.”

The gossip site RadarOnline.com set off speculation this month when it published a lengthy post about an unnamed actor’s H.I.V.-positive diagnosis. Other celebrity websites followed with their own reports — without naming the actor — but The National Enquirer on Monday identified the star as [Charlie Sheen](#). Other media companies, including People Magazine and Radar, then did the same.

An H.I.V. diagnosis was much more serious and often fatal decades ago, but now, while there is no cure, a regimen of antiviral drugs makes it a more manageable illness. Public understanding of H.I.V. has also come a long way since 1991, when the basketball star Earvin “Magic” Johnson Jr. disclosed his status. Since then, Mr. Johnson has backed AIDS-related efforts for the United Nations and other advocacy groups.



Mr. Lauer asked whether Mr. Sheen's behavior problems in 2011 were a reaction to the H.I.V. diagnosis. "I wish I could blame it on that," Mr. Sheen said.

Mr. Sheen said that he continued his risky behavior at the time because he was depressed by his condition. "I was doing a lot of drugs," he said. "I was drinking way too much. I was making a lot of bad decisions."

He later said that he was "very far down the road" in dealing with his demons and felt a responsibility to better himself.

Mr. Sheen said he was "not going to be the poster man for this" but would not shy away from opportunities to help others.

In a second segment on "Today," Mr. Sheen was joined by his doctor, **Robert Huizenga**, an associate professor of clinical medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Dr. Huizenga said that Mr. Sheen was immediately put on treatment when he was diagnosed, which has suppressed the virus. He said that the actor does not have AIDS and is "absolutely healthy," adding that his biggest concern for Mr. Sheen was depression and substance abuse.

Mr. Sheen said that he is on the so-called "triple cocktail" of H.I.V. medications and takes four pills a day. He said that he is not doing drugs but is still drinking.

Mr. Sheen said that since his diagnosis he has never missed taking his medication. Asked whether he would stop drinking, Mr. Sheen said that "perhaps the freedom of today may lead to that as well."

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/18/business/charlie-sheen-hiv-positive.html?_r=0