New pill shows promise against pancreatic cancer

LEVEL B2


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I. WARM-UP

1. What medical news have you read recently?
2. How do you judge if a new treatment sounds reliable?
3. Would you take part in a medical study? Why or why not?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

trial
a test of a new treatment with patients to see if it works and is safe

tumour
a mass of abnormal cells that can grow in the body

undetectable
not found by tests or scans because it is too small or gone

remission
a period when signs of a disease reduce greatly or disappear

chemotherapy
strong cancer drugs used to kill fast-growing cells

inhibitor
a drug that blocks a biological process from happening

mutation
a change in a gene that can affect how cells grow or behave

prognosis
a doctor's prediction about how a disease will likely develop

III. READING

A pill called daraxonrasib is giving new hope for pancreatic cancer. In a trial of 61 people with advanced disease that had spread, tumours stopped growing in 90% of patients. Just over 60% saw tumours shrink or disappear, and about one in 12 had cancer become undetectable on CT scans.

After one year, 76.6% of patients were alive, compared with 40–45% for chemotherapy alone. Doctors warn it is not a cure, and longer studies must show how long control or remission lasts. The median follow-up so far is 18 months, and some patients have not seen the cancer return in that time.

Daraxonrasib is a KRAS inhibitor. It locks on to and shuts off mutations that drive most pancreatic tumours, and may help cancers with similar mutations. Dr Wungki Park of Memorial Sloan Kettering presented the results at the EORTC-NCI-AACR Symposium in Barcelona.

Cancer Research UK called it the biggest advance in decades, but said more trials are needed before NHS use. For a cancer with a very poor prognosis, the early data are striking, if still uncertain.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Pill to treat pancreatic cancer hailed as...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the name of the new pill being tested?
2. What share of patients had cancer become undetectable?
3. How did one-year survival compare with chemotherapy alone?
4. Who presented the findings, and in which city?
5. What does daraxonrasib target in cancer cells?

V. DISCUSSION

1. How hopeful should early medical results be reported to the public?
2. Would you join a clinical trial for a serious illness? Why or why not?
3. What facts would you want before trying a new cancer drug?
4. Should health systems fund drugs before long-term data is available?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Wish / if only

Use wish/if only + past simple for an unreal present. Use wish/if only + past perfect for a past regret. For a change you want, use wish + would + verb.

"Patients **wish their cancer were** *easier to control now."*

"If only the trial **had started** *earlier."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with wish/if only: conjugate the verb in brackets.

1. Researchers wish more patients (respond) ___ now. _____
2. Families wish the side effects (be) ___ milder this week. _____
3. If only the first study (begin) ___ earlier last year. _____
4. Doctors wish they (discover) ___ KRAS blockers years ago. _____
5. Many patients wish the NHS (approve) ___ daraxonrasib soon. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading, 10 minutes comprehension, 10 minutes discussion; fold grammar into reading/comprehension time if needed.
- Pre-teach key terms and names on the board (pancreatic cancer, daraxonrasib, KRAS, Barcelona, EORTC-NCI-AACR) and drill pronunciation and stress.
- Run a pair-scan: assign students different paragraphs to summarise, then compare notes before a whole-class check. The topic involves serious illness; start the discussion in pairs and invite students to talk about the news, not personal experiences.
- Differentiate: stronger learners explain KRAS in one minute using simple words; others underline the evidence in the text that supports each claim (numbers, time frames, sources).

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Elicit initial reactions, then ask students to balance hope with caution using numbers from the text.
2. Take a quick show of hands, then pair students with differing views to exchange reasons and concerns.
3. Board a checklist (safety, side effects, survival rate, who ran the trial) and have students prioritise.
4. Set up a mini-debate: one side argues for early funding, the other for waiting for long-term data.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 90-word news update for patients summarising the trial's key numbers and caveats.

Role-play: In triads, act out a 3-minute meeting: doctor explains the trial, patient asks questions, friend summarises next steps.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Wish / if only

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the name of the new pill being tested?
   Daraxonrasib.
2. What share of patients had cancer become undetectable?
   About one in 12 patients, roughly 8%.
3. How did one-year survival compare with chemotherapy alone?
   76.6% with the pill versus about 40–45% with chemotherapy alone.
4. Who presented the findings, and in which city?
   Dr Wungki Park, in Barcelona.
5. What does daraxonrasib target in cancer cells?
   KRAS mutations; it is a KRAS inhibitor that shuts them off.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with wish/if only: conjugate the verb in brackets.

1. Researchers wish more patients ___ now.
   responded / would respond
2. Families wish the side effects ___ milder this week.
   were / would be
3. If only the first study ___ earlier last year. **had begun**
4. Doctors wish they ___ KRAS blockers years ago.
   had discovered
5. Many patients wish the NHS ___ daraxonrasib soon.
   would approve

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use wish/if only + past simple for an unreal present. Use wish/if only + past perfect for a past regret. For a change you want, use wish + would + verb. (Examples constructed.)

> *"Patients* **wish their cancer were** *easier to control now."*
>
> *"If only the trial* **had started** *earlier."*