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Pfizer Covid-19 Pill is 89 Percent Effective at Preventing Severe Illness and Death; Company to Seek FDA Approval This Month

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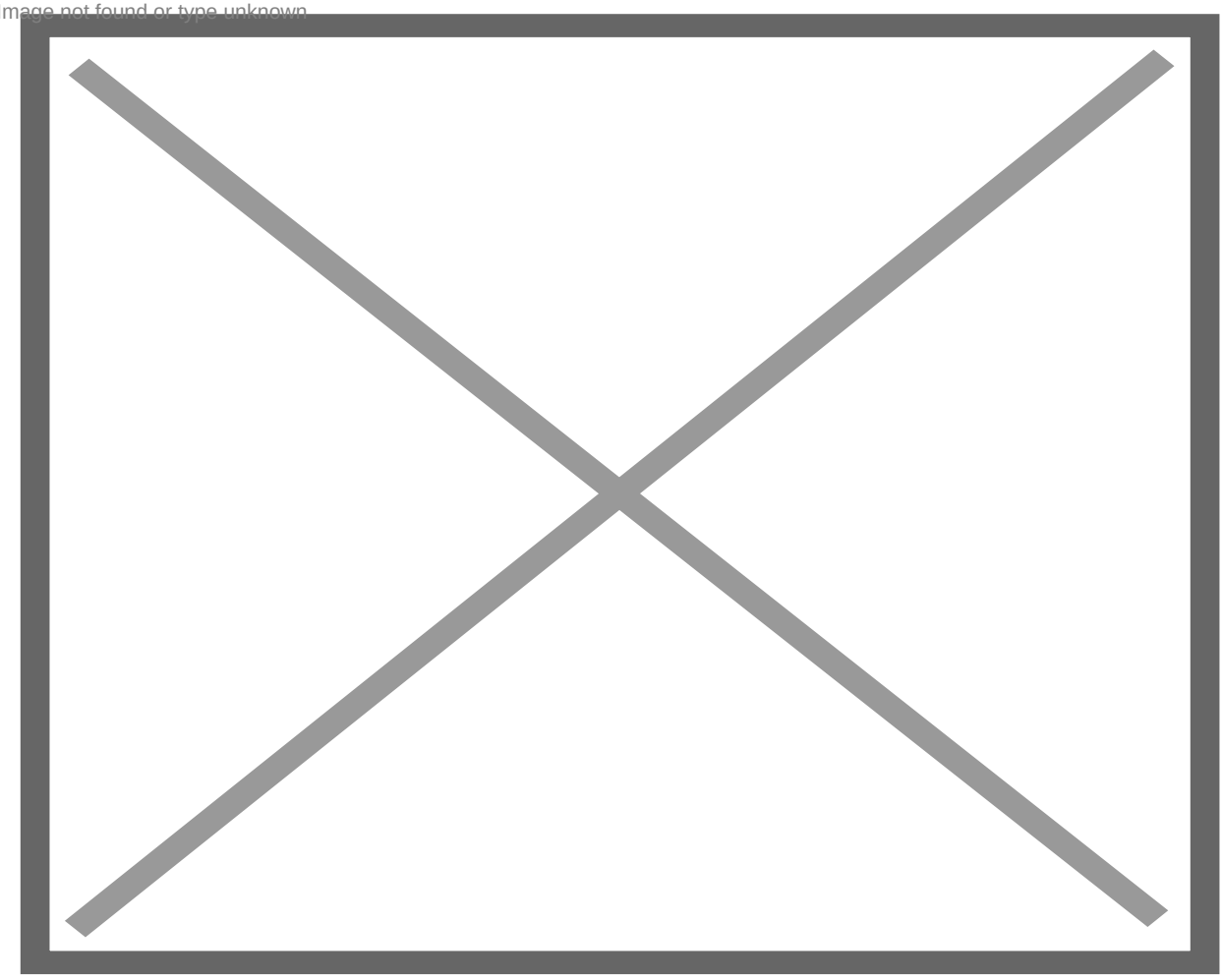

Pfizer Inc.'s experimental pill is 89 percent effective at preventing people at high risk of severe Covid-19 illness from needing hospitalization or dying, the company said in a release Friday.

The announcement marks the second company whose Covid drug in pill form has showed promising results against the virulent disease. In October, Merck and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics announced that their experimental Covid-19 pill significantly helped high-risk people in the early stage of infection from becoming seriously ill or dying.

The Pfizer drug, called Paxlovid, cut the risk of hospitalization or death in study subjects with mild to moderate Covid-19 by about 89 percent if taken within three days of diagnosis, Pfizer

said. Paxlovid was also found to be generally safe and well-tolerated in the early look at study results still ongoing, according to the company.

Pfizer Chief Scientific Officer Mikael Dolsten, who has been amazed by the results, said the company plans on seeking Food and Drug Administration approval this month. If given the green light, Pfizer could start supplying Paxlovid by the end of the 2021.

“It’s stunning data,” Dr. Dolsten said in an interview (via WSJ). ”I feel very optimistic on a day like this. For everyone living in this pandemic, a new light of hope has turned on.”

Pfizer chairman and CEO Albert Bourla, deemed the results a defining moment. “Today’s news is a real game-changer in the global efforts to halt the devastation of this pandemic," he said in a release. "These data suggest that our oral antiviral candidate, if approved or authorized by regulatory authorities, has the potential to save patients’ lives, reduce the severity of COVID-19 infections, and eliminate up to nine out of ten hospitalizations,” he said. “Given the continued global impact of COVID-19, we have remained laser-focused on the science and fulfilling our responsibility to help healthcare systems and institutions around the world while ensuring equitable and broad access to people everywhere.”

The company said if its drug is approved, it would be the first oral antiviral of its kind, a protease inhibitor, designed for Covid-19. "Upon successful completion of the remainder of the clinical development program and subject to approval or authorization, it could be prescribed more broadly as an at-home treatment to help reduce illness severity, hospitalizations, and deaths, as well as reduce the probability of infection following exposure, among adults," Pfizer said. "It has demonstrated potent antiviral in vitro activity against circulating variants of concern, as well as other known coronaviruses, suggesting its potential as a therapeutic for multiple types of coronavirus infections."

According to the Wall Street Journal, Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine has become the shot of choice around the world, developed together with BioNTech SE. Pfizer this week raised its forecast for the vaccine’s sales this year to $36 billion, according to WSJ.