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Pfizer Covid-19 Pill 89 Percent Effective in Final Analysis of Key Study at Preventing Hospitalization and Death

Art / **Published On December 15, 2021 07:16 AM /**

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A machine is used in the development of Pfizer's Paxlovid Covid-19 drug. By. Pfizer

Pfizer's Covid-19 pill named Paxlovid maintained 89 percent effectiveness at reducing hospitalization and death, a result deemed game-changing in the fight against the global pandemic.

The results, which also gave encouraging signs of Paxlovid's effectiveness against the Omicron variant, is expected to inform Covid-induced decision-making by governments around the world, with matters such as restrictions, mandates and lockdowns being impacted.

Pfizer announced its findings by way of [press release](#) Tuesday. The announcement will weigh on the Food and Drug Administration's decision to approve Paxlovid for use in high-risk adults, which the federal authority has been reviewing. An approval could come before the end of December.

Relative to the drug's effectiveness against the Omicron variant, researchers had early signs of success because Paxlovid stops the virus by blocking the activity of a key enzyme, known as protease, that the virus needs to replicate. This enzyme isn't believed to have been mutated in Omicron.

“This news provides further corroboration that our oral antiviral candidate, if authorized or approved, could have a meaningful impact on the lives of many, as the data further support the efficacy of Paxlovid in reducing hospitalization and death and show a substantial decrease in viral load. This underscores the treatment candidate’s potential to save the lives of patients around the world,” said Albert Bourla, chairman and chief executive officer of Pfizer. “Emerging variants of concern, like Omicron, have exacerbated the need for accessible treatment options for those who contract the virus, and we are confident that, if authorized or approved, this potential treatment could be a critical tool to help quell the pandemic.”

“This was a real home run, gives tremendous hope for another highly effective intervention,” Pfizer Chief Scientific Officer Mikael Dolsten said in an interview (via the Wall Street Journal).

Paxlovid also reduces the risk of hospitalization and death by 70 percent in low-risk adults, according to a separate preliminary analysis, though the drug failed to eliminate their symptoms within four days.

Study subjects who were at high risk for hospitalization and death from Covid-19 had to have at least one characteristic or underlying condition such as old age or obesity, according to Pfizer. The separate study included individuals who were either at low risk for hospitalization or death, or were unvaccinated.

With the positive results published, a number of analysts believe Paxlovid will become the drug of choice for people newly infected with Covid-19 who are looking to prevent severe illness. According to WSJ, JP Morgan Chase & Co. analysts estimated \$18 billion in sales next year.

Pfizer said Paxlovid was developed to be administered orally so that if authorized or approved, "it can be prescribed at the first sign of infection or at first awareness of an exposure – potentially helping patients avoid severe illness (which can lead to hospitalization and death) or avoid disease development following contact with a household member who contracts Covid-19."