Pancreatic Cancer

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Why in News?

A new experimental pill is offering hope for patients with pancreatic cancer, one of the deadliest and hardest-to-treat forms of the disease, and can double the survival time.

- **Pancreatic Cancer** – It is an aggressive tumour that forms in your pancreas, a gland that aids in digestion.
- **Types**
  - **Adenocarcinoma** (exocrine tumours) – This is the most common type, accounts for over 90%.
  - **Neuroendocrine tumours** – These rare tumours are also called PNETs and are slower-growing.
- **Causes** – It's not clear what causes pancreatic cancer.
- **Risk** – Genetic mutations (e.g., KRAS, BRCA1/2), Most cases diagnosed after age 60, Lifestyle factors (smoking, obesity, poor diet), Medical history; and having a family history of pancreatic cancer.
- **Symptoms** – There aren't any early signs of pancreatic cancer; it often occurs at a later stage.
- Abdominal/back pain, jaundice, Digestive problems (nausea, bloating, diarrhoea, constipation), Loss of appetite & weight loss, Itchy skin and Fatigue, etc.
- **Diagnosis** – Imaging tests (CT, MRI, PET, endoscopic ultrasound), Blood tests, Biopsy & Genetic testing.
- **Treatment** – It is one of the hardest cancers to treat; we can do surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, targeted therapy & palliative care.

Quick Fact

About the new pill Daraxonrasib
• **Daraxonrasib** – A new oral pill targeting *RAS mutations*, has nearly doubled survival in advanced pancreatic cancer patients. • The drug works by *targeting KRAS, a cancer-driving gene mutation* found in the vast majority of pancreatic tumours. • **RAS** – It is a protein that is universally expressed in almost all cell types in the human body, encoded by a gene called the RAS gene. • About 20% of all cancers involve RAS mutations. • Nearly 80% of pancreatic cancer cases show KRAS mutations, making it a major research focus. • **Availability** – The drug is *not available in India*.

References

1. Indian Express | A new pill can double survival time for deadliest cancer
2. Cleveland Clinic | Pancreatic Cancer