



The 86 cancer patients were a disparate group, with tumors of the pancreas, prostate, uterus or bone. One woman had a cancer so rare there were no tested treatments. She was told to get her affairs in order.

Still, these patients had a few things in common. All had advanced disease that had resisted every standard treatment. All carried genetic mutations that disrupted the ability of cells to fix damaged DNA. And all were enrolled in a trial of a drug that helps the immune system attack tumors.

The results, published on Thursday in the journal *Science*, are so striking that the Food and Drug Administration already has approved the drug, pembrolizumab, brand name Keytruda, for patients whose cancers arise from the same genetic abnormality.

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