

## Genetic gamble: A new cancer treatment's tantalizing promise brings heartbreaking ups and downs



For the first time since a rare [cancer](#) appeared eight years before, her lymph nodes had shrunk to a normal size, her skin was no longer bright red and inflamed, and the itchiness that plagued her had subsided. Mrs. McDaniel, the 69-year-old wife of a retired corporate executive, had gambled on the ultimate in personalized medicine, an approach known as whole genome sequencing, and it seemed to be paying off. Scientists had compared the entire genetic sequences of the [tumor](#) cells invading her body with those in her healthy cells, searching for mutated tumor genes that could be thwarted by drugs approved for other cancers or even other diseases. That had led them to give her an expensive drug approved just a month earlier for [melanoma](#) patients. It had never been given to anyone with a blood cell cancer like hers. In theory, the drug should have killed her. Instead, it seemed to have halted or even reversed her cancer.

### Additional Resources:

- On Genes, cancer and future dreams, Knight Science Journalism Tracker

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