

## Breakthrough Novartis ‘living cell’ leukemia drug to debut but at \$650,000 per treatment

When doctors talk about a new leukemia drug from Novartis, they ooze enthusiasm, using words like “breakthrough,” “revolutionary” and [“a watershed moment.”](#)

But when they think about how much the therapy is likely to cost, their tone turns alarmist.

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Switzerland-based Novartis hasn’t announced a price for the medicine, but British health authorities have said a price of \$649,000 for a one-time treatment would be justified given the significant benefits.

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The treatment, CTL019, belongs to a new class of medications called CAR T-cell therapies, which involve harvesting patients’ immune cells and genetically altering them to kill cancer.[...] [In a clinical trial](#), 83 percent of those treated with CAR T-cell therapy—described as a [“living drug”](#) because it derives from a patient’s own cells—have gone into remission.

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Rather than wait for Novartis to announce a price, an advocacy group called [Patients for Affordable Drugs](#) has launched a pre-emptive strike, asking to meet with company officials to discuss a “fair” price for the therapy.

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Saltz, an oncologist who has long spoken out about high drug prices, said he applauded the patients group’s efforts. But he said he doubts their efforts will persuade Novartis to set a reasonably affordable price.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [“Breakthrough” Leukemia Drug Portends “Quantum Leap” In Cost](#)**