

### 3 ways to beat... TENSION HEADACHES

**PREVENT:** Half of UK adults experience tension headaches, which cause pain at the sides of head, neck or behind the eyes, at least once a month. These headaches usually develop in the afternoon. Triggers to avoid include stress, tiredness, skipping meals, squinting and bright sunlight. Poor posture causes tension in the upper body, which can also lead to a headache.

**TREAT:** Tension headaches can usually be relieved by painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, or lifestyle changes. However, see a GP if you experience headaches several times a week or the headaches are severe. An antidepressant called amitriptyline may be prescribed to help prevent chronic tension-type headaches, and must be taken daily for several months until the headaches lessen. Try keeping a diary to pinpoint the cause of your headaches, and take regular exercise and relaxation to help reduce stress. Lying down in a dimly lit room with a warm or cold flannel over the painful area may also help. Acupuncture over a five-to-eight week period may help prevent chronic tension headaches. Two large studies showed people who had acupuncture had fewer days with tension headaches compared to those receiving conventional care, but the practice is not widely available on the NHS.

**DON'T BOTHER:** Painkillers shouldn't be taken for more than a few days at a time and medication containing codeine, such as co-codamol, should be avoided unless recommended by a GP. Taking painkillers for headaches over several months can lead to medication-overuse headaches developing as your body gets used to the medication and the headaches develop if you stop taking them.

### BOOK ME IN!

**Paleo Monday  
To Friday,**  
by Daniel Green  
Recipes for a diet  
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By **Antonia  
Hoyle**

**I** DON'T know Demi Pestell, but after a few hours together I feel as if we're friends. Within a few minutes of meeting, she confides hilarious – and unprintable – secrets about a dreadful ex-boyfriend. Cue much laughter.

Given the fact that I know she has a rare terminal lung cancer, it feels like a terrible cliché to say she is 'so full of life'. I can't help but think it though. She's turned up in a stunning body-con dress and heels while I'm in Saturday jeans and ill-fitting shirt – and I feel as if I'm the one who looks unwell.

Yet three years ago, the 36-year-old former diving instructor from Northampton was effectively handed a death sentence when doctors warned she had just weeks to live. Tumours had spread from her lungs to her liver, bones and brain, and her only hope of survival was taking part in a clinical trial for a new drug.

That drug, called Zykadia, transformed her. She had been wheelchair-bound and suffering daily seizures. Today, although doctors can find 'no trace' of cancer in her body, she still, apparently, has it – and it could return at any moment. But she is an outwardly healthy-looking young woman leading a normal life.

It seems like a miracle, but experts have hailed Zykadia as consistently performing such works of magic in similarly bleak cases.

Yet this is where the good news begins to end. The lifeline handed to Demi by Zykadia – proven in trials to prolong life by an average of 16 months – is being denied to other patients in the same position.

In January this year medicines watchdog the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) rejected the £165-a-day drug for the NHS because of cost.

NICE has since revealed it is looking again at this decision, saying an error was made in the evidence they received. However, the drug is still not currently available on the NHS.

To make matters worse, Britain's flagship fund to pay for life-enhancing cancer drugs in England is up for review and the approval of new treatments is suspended.

**T**HE Cancer Drugs Fund (CDF) was set up five years ago to allow patients to access new and expensive medicines before they were approved for widespread NHS use.

The CDF could have been a last-chance saloon for patients desperate for Zykadia.

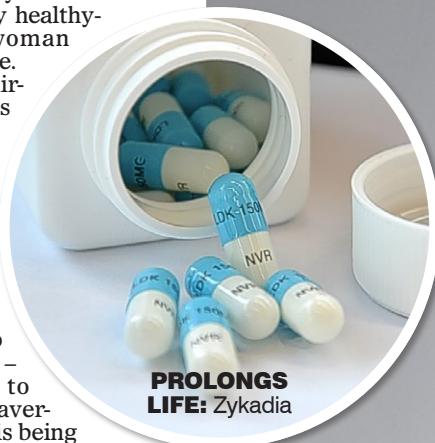
The drug works by blocking a cancer-causing protein found in a rare form of lung cancer that typically affects younger people who, like Demi, are non-smokers.

Despite acknowledging its ability to 'prolong life and delay disease progression', NICE said the drug, which costs just under £5,000 for a 30-day supply, wasn't a 'cost-efficient' use of NHS resources.

Yet Zykadia was approved for use in Scotland in December by NICE equivalent the Scottish Medicines Consortium. It was also licensed for use by the USA's Food and Drug Administration in 2014 and by the European Medicines Agency in May last year.

While Demi and others currently on trials for Zykadia will be allowed to continue taking the drug for as long as it is effective, NICE's current position means others won't be so fortunate. Asked about this, Demi

# Why ARE health chiefs denying lung cancer patients the wonder drug that brought this woman back from the brink?



**PROLONGS  
LIFE:** Zykadia

## DRUG FUND 'UNSUSTAINABLE'

**SURVIVAL** rates for cancer patients in England are generally worse than in other high-income European countries, mainly because patients in England tend to be diagnosed later and have poorer access to treatment.

The Government established the Cancer Drugs Fund in 2010 to improve access to drugs not routinely available on the NHS.

For drugs to be available on the NHS, they must also be recommended by NICE, which

appraises clinical performance and cost-effectiveness.

The CDF gave patients another way of accessing drugs that had been rejected by NICE on cost or clinical grounds, or had not yet been appraised.

Although 80,000 people have received drugs since its inception, the CDF, which is overseen by NHS England, has proved controversial.

Money had to be diverted from primary care to cover two years of overspend, when the fund's

£480million budget for the two years from 2013 to 2015 was overspent by £167million.

The fund heavily scaled back the number of treatments it backed following the overspend, axing drugs for breast, bowel, pancreatic and blood cancers.

The Public Accounts Committee said earlier this month that the fund was 'not sustainable' in its current form, and NHS England and NICE are now consulting on proposals to reform it from April 2016.

is unequivocal: 'People in boardrooms are handing out death sentences by not approving this drug. They are putting a price on people's lives, and effectively saying those lives are worthless. I'm proof Zykadia works, and don't understand how cost comes into it – who wouldn't give everything they have for a few more months with their family?'

Demi was diagnosed with stage four cancer in December 2012 after developing a persistent cough, back pain and coughing up blood.

An MRI scan revealed cancer in her liver, bones and brain.

Doctors decided it had originated in her lungs as non-small-cell lung cancer. Of the 39,000 people diagnosed with non-small-cell lung cancer in the UK every year, about five per cent have a type caused by a defect in a gene called ALK, or anaplastic lymphoma kinase.

This produces a faulty protein that causes cancer cells to grow and spread. Sufferers of ALK+ non-small-cell lung cancer tend to be under

50 and, like Demi, non-smokers. Her consultant told her that her cancer was incurable and that without chemotherapy she had just days to live.

'I was devastated,' Demi recalls. 'All I could think about were the things I had left to do, like falling in love, having children and travelling the world. I was only 33. I wasn't ready for my life to be over.'

By now wheelchair-bound and too sick to work, she endured four gruelling rounds of chemotherapy, but in March 2013 Demi's oncologist



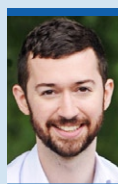


ON ONE hand you have an incredible new medicine that has transformed the lives of lung cancer patients who have tried it. On the other, the reality that NHS money is finite. And someone has to decide how it gets spent.

The National Institute for Care and Health Excellence (NICE) does this difficult job very well. Its decision-making process is based on cost-effectiveness: how much a drug improves health compared to already available options. It also has to look at how many patients will be on the treatment, for how long, and whether taking the drug will save money spent in other areas of care – hospital visits, for instance.

It's a cold, hard calculation and generally it means we have access to the best, evidence-based treatments available.

Just because something is new doesn't mean it is better. This process is



## Health COMMENT

By Barney Calman

there, ultimately, to protect us. But they can get it wrong.

Yes, Zykadia costs a lot. New drugs generally do.

However, the numbers who will need it are tiny – possibly in the hundreds each year.

It's not a cure – it extends life by about a year. But just look at Demi. We aren't talking about survival, but in this time she can lead a real, fulfilling and active life, despite her terminal disease.

NICE recently gave the green light for UK doctors to prescribe Britain's 200,000-plus hepatitis C sufferers 'cure' drug Solvadi at a breathtaking cost of £69,965 for a six-month course of tablets. So if it can find the money for all of them, surely it can for cancer patients such as Demi?



**ORDEAL:** Demi Pestell after chemotherapy in January 2013

told her that chemo was putting her body under so much stress that one more round could cause heart failure. She was then put on a drug called Xalkori, which works by blocking the faulty ALK protein. Within weeks, the four-a-day pills were having a remarkable effect, with scans showing the tumours on her liver and lungs were shrinking. 'I started to stand up, and then hobble, and by the summer I was out of my wheelchair,' says Demi. 'I could go for walks in the countryside again, and even went to Paris. I started to enjoy life again.'

But Demi's progress was short-lived as, by spring 2014, the cancer in her brain started to cause seizures that left her unable to walk, write or see properly. 'I lost consciousness for 90 minutes after one particularly bad seizure, and the doctors told my mum I had two weeks to live,' she says.

**D**EMI was handed a lifeline when she was offered a place to take part in a clinical trial of Zykadia at Leicester Royal Infirmary. Crucially, unlike Xalkori, the drug is able to pass through the brain membrane to target cancerous cells there. Two single-arm studies into Zykadia of patients with ALK+ non-small-cell lung cancer have showed an absolute overall survival rate of 16 months.

One study involved 163 patients with cancer that had spread and who had previously had both chemotherapy and Xalkori. Zykadia was shown to shrink or slow the growth of tumours in 55 per cent of cases.

Outlining its decision to approve Zykadia, the Scottish Medicines Consortium described it as a 'potent' drug and 'strongly' recommended it. Yet despite describing Zykadia in its initial decision as 'innovative' and acknowledging its ability to 'prolong life and delay disease progression', NICE said the extent of treatment benefit was 'uncertain' and that the data provided by Zykadia manufac-

turer Novartis had not yet been examined 'robustly' enough.

Dr Rohit Lal, a consultant oncologist at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust specialising in the treatment of lung cancer, is 'deeply disappointed' by NICE's initial decision to reject Zykadia.

He claims the gap has widened between England and the rest of the world as far as availability of cancer drugs is concerned. 'This type of cancer tends to happen to younger people – and in particular those who don't smoke,' he says. 'Many have small children and are still the cornerstone of their family. In those circumstances the extra months of life make a real difference. Zykadia is the only treatment available for patients after Xalkori and the only drug available here that can effectively treat this type of lung cancer once it has entered the brain.'

Demi has been taking Zykadia four times a day for nearly two years. It has been so successful at shrinking her tumours that, at a scan in November, doctors were unable to detect any sign of the disease.

'My hair has grown back, I'm looking for part-time work and I've fallen in love,' beams Demi. 'People think lung cancer is a disease that only happens to old smokers – I'm proof this is not the case.'

Swiss drugs giant Novartis claims NICE initially rejected Zykadia because it reviewed it prematurely.

At that stage Zykadia had shown promising phase I and phase II trials but, Novartis believe, the NICE appraisal process is not designed to appraise drugs that haven't released the results of their phase III trials, and these are due later this year.

Others, meanwhile, say the financially stretched NHS simply can't afford the new generation of 'designer' cancer drugs that Zykadia belongs to and that pharmaceutical companies have a responsibility to sell at lower prices, which vary between countries.

In the US for example, Zykadia costs £4,000 more than here, at £9,000 a month. Drug companies are prepared to negotiate on price – indeed NICE says Novartis offered a discount on Zykadia to the Scottish Medicines Consortium that was not submitted as part of the initial decision review with NICE – but insist costs need to remain high to justify the millions spent on research and development.

NICE also points out that it is told which drugs to review by the Department of Health. It adds that consultations between Novartis, healthcare professionals and the public are ongoing. But to Demi, cost doesn't come into it.

'I should be dead by now but I am fit, healthy and alive,' she says. 'I am intent on enjoying the present rather than what the future holds. I love my life and have so much to give. How can anyone put a price on that?'

## HEALTH NOTES

# Heidi wedded to her weight-loss gadget

SINGER Heidi Range is turning to technology to lose weight in time for her wedding.

The former Sugababes star, right, is using a Microsoft Band to count the calories ahead of her nuptials to property developer Alex Partakis later this year.

Worn like a wristwatch, the gadget allows users to track heart rate and calorie burn while walking, working out and even while sleeping.

A GPS function lets runners and cyclists check their pace and see a map of their route when the device is synced with a smartphone or computer.

'I'm obsessed by it,' admits Heidi, 32. 'I use it to compare how much I can burn doing different exercises.'

'I want to burn off as many calories as possible, so if I'm not burning off enough compared to what I eat, then it's motivation to do some exercise.'

Heidi revealed that she wants to reach a target weight of eight stone for her wedding in Florence in September.

'I've found the dress,' she adds. 'I spent three days looking and



TIM WHITBY / WIRE IMAGE

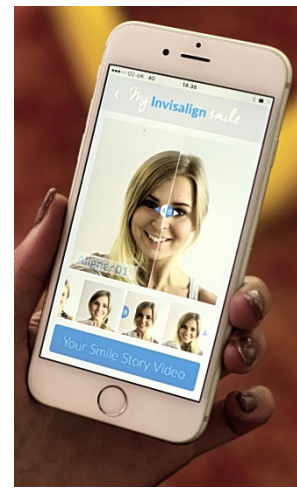
burst into tears when I saw it. Maybe I'll do the same when I slim down and it has to be taken in. 'I'll have to wear waterproof mascara on the wedding day.'

**THERE** are regular warnings about the dangers of loud music to our ears, but new research shows that listening to live music can actually make you healthier.

Researchers at the Royal College of Music and Imperial College have observed that the hormone levels of concert-goers change significantly after just 60 minutes, and that this may lead to reduced stress and more effective immune systems.

In the study published in the journal Public Health, the researchers took saliva samples from people attending two concerts in London and Cheltenham, both before the start of the event and at the 60-minute interval.

Results show that at both events there were significant drops among audience members' stress hormone levels, including cortisol. There were also positive changes in the hormone DHEA, which has been associated with boosting the immune system, lowering cholesterol and improving muscle function.



## App brings smile to brace wearers

A 'SELFIE' app has been launched to help brace wearers track their smile transformation. The Invisalign app allows users to capture consistently positioned camera shots of their teeth showing their day-by-day progress, and can be used to make a time-lapse video. The app is designed to be used with the Invisalign brace system, which uses custom-made transparent plastic aligners to straighten teeth instead of metal brackets. The aligners are changed every two weeks to correct the teeth over a period of months.

The My Invisalign Smile app is free to download from the Apple Store.

## OAPs spurn shingles jab

HEALTH chiefs are urging pensioners to get vaccinated against shingles following a drop in the number of people having the jab. Figures from Public Health England reveal a two per cent drop in 70-year-olds having the jab between September and November 2015 on the previous year.

Most commonly seen in the over-70s, shingles is caused by the chickenpox virus, which can lie dormant in the nervous tissue. The infection causes pain and a rash, and complications can include post-herpetic neuralgia – persistent nerve pain. Dr Mary Ramsay, head of immunisation at Public Health England, said: 'We offer the shingles vaccine routinely to individuals at the age of 70 years to boost their immunity.'

**CAMERAS** have captured life behind the scenes at one of Britain's biggest children's hospitals for a new documentary series. From the emergency room to one of the largest intensive care units in Europe, Inside Birmingham Children's Hospital follows children and their families coping with everything from life-threatening illness to childhood bumps and scrapes. The programme roams across 34 medical departments, covering stories such as a 16-year-old facing pioneering brain surgery, a teenage girl arguing with her mother over cosmetic surgery and a father donating part of his liver to his son. The series is to be broadcast on Channel 4 in the spring.

**FULLY FIT:** Yet Demi Pestell was days from death