NEWS BREAK

Article: **New blood test could help spot one of the deadliest cancers early**

Section: **NW, C1**

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, May 10, 2026,** of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

Feel free to adapt this lesson for your students. For instance, some educators may assign this as a homework task, while others might facilitate the reading and discussion of questions within small groups or larger class discussions.

Please take a moment to review all NIE content before classroom use to ensure it is suitable for your students.*

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Learning Objectives:

After reading the article, students will analyze how scientists are developing a new blood test to detect pancreatic cancer earlier and more safely than traditional biopsies. The article will explain why early detection is important for improving survival rates and patient outcomes. Students will also learn how biomarkers and new medical technologies can help doctors diagnose diseases and will evaluate how scientific innovation may improve healthcare in the future.

Pre-Reading Discussion:

- What do you think the article will be about, using this picture?
- Are there any clues? What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A ***context clue*** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the meaning of the word.

"They carry ***biomarkers*** such as proteins and DNA, pieces of the tumor itself, and we can collect them with a simple blood drop." Ibsen said his team designed a microchip that uses a small electrical charge to pull those particles out of a blood sample.

Biomarkers Guess:

Biomarkers Definition:

Comprehension Questions:

1. Scientists at Oregon Health & Science University say they are getting closer to a simple _____ _____ that could help doctors detect pancreatic cancer earlier, without putting patients through _____ _____.
2. What does this specific test search for?
   _____
   _____

3. The technique, outlined in a new study, identified cancer with _____ _____ in early testing and, in some cases, worked better than the biopsy procedure doctors currently use.
4. That matters because _____ _____ is one of the deadliest cancers and doctors often don't find it until it has already spread.
5. Overall, only about ____% of people diagnosed with the disease are still alive five years later, according to the National Cancer Institute. Catching it earlier can change that dramatically.
6. "Pancreatic cancer is really hard to detect-why?

   _____
   _____
7. Doctors typically confirm pancreatic cancer with a biopsy-what happens during that procedure?

   _____
   _____
8. But the procedure can miss cancers and carries risks, including _____ in some patients, according to the study.
9. It was a blind study, what does that mean?

   _____
   _____
10. The test looks for two key warning signs. What are they and why was looking at both together, so important?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
11. Scientists found that the chip can pull out tumor-related particles in about ____ minutes, compared with roughly ____ hours using traditional lab methods.
12. And a blood draw carries far fewer risks than a biopsy, Ibsen said. But researchers said the work is still early. The study involved a small number of patients. Ibsen said the next step is what?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

Class Discussion Questions:

- What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
- At first, I thought _____, but now I think _____?

Deeper-Dive "Connect & Explain" comprehension questions for small groups, entire classes or journal entries and/ or essay prompts for extended enrichment:

1. Why is pancreatic cancer often called one of the "deadliest" cancers, and how does early detection change a patient's chances of survival?
2. The article explains that scientists are developing a blood test instead of relying only on biopsies. How could less invasive medical technology improve healthcare access and patient safety?
3. How does the work being done at Oregon Health & Science University show the connection between science, engineering, and medicine?
4. The study focused on biomarkers found in blood samples. Why do you think scientists place so much importance on finding measurable evidence before diagnosing disease?
5. The researchers tested patients with both cancerous and non-cancerous conditions. Why is it important for scientists to make sure a medical test can accurately distinguish between different illnesses?
6. Medical breakthroughs often take years of testing before becoming widely available. Why is careful scientific testing important before new technology is used on the public?
7. How might earlier cancer detection affect healthcare costs, quality of life, and survival rates in the United States?
8. Should governments invest more funding into early-detection medical research? Why or why not? Support your answer with examples from the article.
9. How does this article demonstrate the role universities and research institutions play in solving major public health problems?
10. Compare the risks of traditional biopsies with the benefits of blood-based testing. Which method would you prefer as a patient, and why?
11. Scientific advancements can sometimes raise ethical questions. What concerns might people have about widespread cancer screening tests, and how should society address them?
12. How can articles like this influence public understanding of science and trust in medical research?