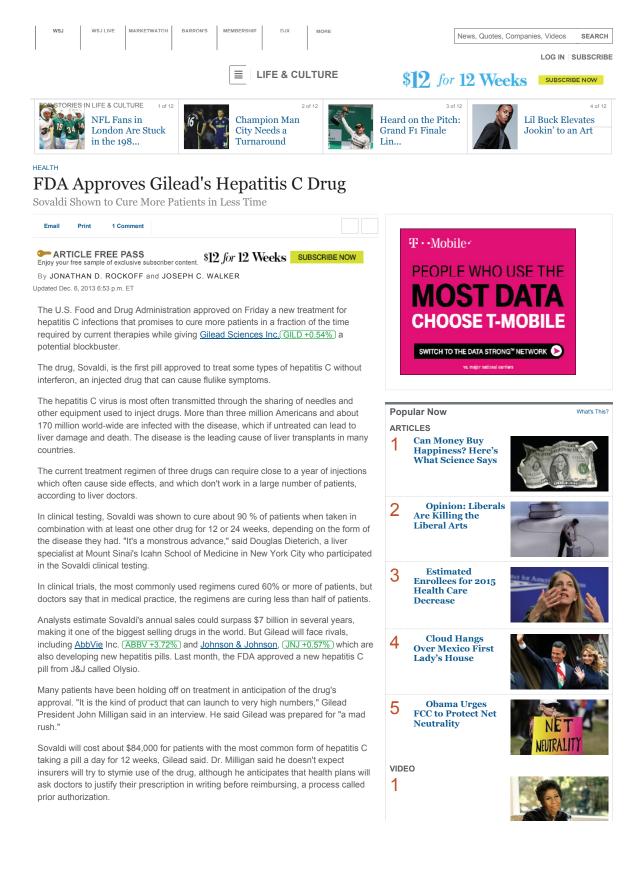
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The drug is a so-called nucleotide analogue, or nuc, that blocks a protein needed by the hepatitis C virus to replicate.

It was the crown jewel of Gilead's \$11 billion purchase of Pharmasset in 2012. Gilead, of Foster City, Calif., paid a high, 90% premium to beat out rivals, but the drug gives the company an entree into a multibillion-dollar market that is rapidly growing as patients learn they have the disease and opt for treatments that are getting easier to take.

Gilead is known for its treatments for HIV/AIDS, but it has been looking to diversify its portfolio.

Many doctors and patients have been waiting for new hepatitis C drugs that can be taken without interferon injections.

For the most common type of hepatitis C, known as Genotype 1, the FDA approved Sovaldi for use in combination with interferon and a pill called ribavirin. Gilead is still studying Sovaldi's use without interferon in Genotype 1 patients. Dr. Milligan said the results of these clinical trials will become available starting later this year.

For two less common types of the virus, known as Genotypes 2 and 3, the FDA approved Sovaldi's use alongside ribavirin and without interferon.

The FDA also approved Sovaldi's use in patients who are either awaiting a liver transplant or received one; these patients are vulnerable to fast-moving infections.

Write to Jonathan D. Rockoff at jonathan.rockoff@wsj.com and Joseph Walker at joseph.walker@wsj.com

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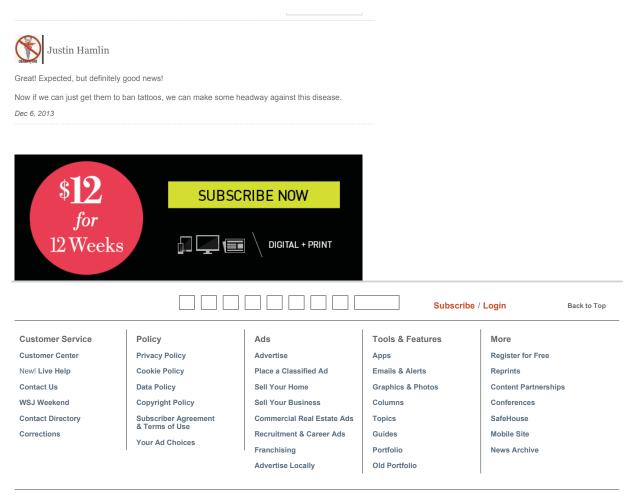
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