

## Immunology drug drawback: Potential cancer cures may attack body's organs

[I]mmunotherapy drugs have been hailed as a breakthrough in cancer treatment, attracting billions of research dollars and offering new hope to patients out of options. But as their use grows, doctors are finding that they pose serious risks that stem from the very thing that makes them effective. An unleashed immune system can attack healthy, vital organs: notably the bowel, the liver and the lungs, but also the kidneys, the adrenal and pituitary glands, the pancreas and, in rare cases, [the heart](#).

In cancer clinics around the world, and in drug trials, myriad other side effects are showing up. Studies are finding that severe reactions occur [nearly 20 percent of the time](#) with certain drugs, and in [more than half of patients](#) when some drugs are used in combination.

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"We've heard about immunotherapy as God's gift, the chosen elixir, the cure for cancer," said [Dr. John Timmerman, an oncologist and immunotherapy researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles]. "We haven't heard much about the collateral damage."

Despite the warnings, physicians like Dr. Timmerman remain hugely supportive of drugs that are saving the lives of people who would otherwise die. Far better to cope with diabetes, [hepatitis](#) or [arthritis](#), the thinking goes, than to die.

Doctors are using immunotherapy to help the cells of the immune system recognize and attack cancer cells. Credit: The New York Times

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Immune System, Unleashed by Cancer Therapies, Can Attack Organs](#)**