

Will cancer patients reap benefits of 'breakthroughs' in immunotherapy?

Cancer drugs are all too often hailed as miracles, breakthroughs, game-changers, or even cures, even when they are no such thing. We recently reported [in JAMA Oncology](#) that these words were used 50 percent of the time to describe drugs not approved by the FDA, and 14 percent of the time to describe drugs that had only worked in mice.

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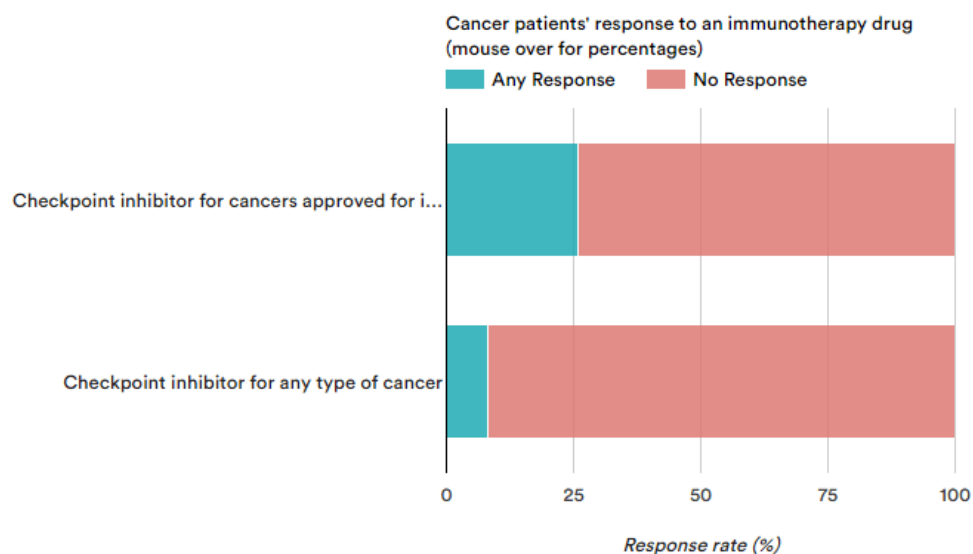
Consider [immunotherapy](#). This new form of cancer therapy, which uses the body's own immune system to fight cancer, has captivated the public imagination, is a topic of the nightly news, and has been featured in at least one [Super Bowl ad](#).

When immunotherapy works, the result is terrific, even life-changing. Today, though, only a tiny minority of patients expected to die from cancer will benefit from immunotherapy. As is often the case, hype sadly exceeds evidence, creating misunderstandings between patients and their doctors.

Capture
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Credit: Natalia Bronshtein/STAT.

Using US national cancer statistics and FDA approvals, we estimated the percent of cancer patients who might actually benefit from immunotherapy...[Surprisingly,] the answer was just 8 percent.



Source: Natalia Bronshtein/STAT.

What do these results mean? When immunotherapy works,...the results are terrific...But at least today, few patients can expect to be among the lucky ones.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Few people actually benefit from 'breakthrough' cancer immunotherapy](#)