

How coronavirus wreaks havoc on the body, organ by organ

Covid-19 has confounded the expectations of doctors. Patients suffer from a bewildering variety of complications. They urinate blood, complain of heartburn and lose their sense of smell and taste. A 56-year-old man in a Beijing Hospital developed brain inflammation; his face began to twitch and he hiccuped uncontrollably. A 71-year-old woman, returning to the US from Egypt, [developed back pain](#), vomiting and bloody diarrhoea.

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[Physician Simon] Ashworth has seen bodies laced with blood clots and patients hit with heart attacks, strokes and kidney failure. "I think that in the scientific and political discourse that took place, there was a failure to recognise that we just don't know very much about this disease," says Ashworth.

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This severity reflects a blunt truth – we do not have a treatment for Covid-19 yet. Doctors can support failing organs with ventilators and dialysis machines, but against the virus itself they are empty-handed. "You've got a situation where this virus gets a free run at you until your immune system works out how to deal with it," says Ashworth. And part of how it deals with it is it to kill the cells which have been infected by Covid-19, which are part of your body."

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