

Cancer immunotherapy found safe in patients with rheumatologic diseases

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In the largest single-center study of patients with rheumatologic diseases who were prescribed modern cancer immunotherapy with what are called immune checkpoint inhibitors, only a minority of patients experienced a flare of their rheumatologic disease or immune-related side effects.

The *Arthritis and Rheumatology* study included 16 [patients](#) with rheumatologic diseases—including rheumatoid arthritis, polymyalgia rheumatica, Sjogren's syndrome, and systemic lupus erythematosus—who were later diagnosed with cancer. After initiating cancer immunotherapy, immune-related adverse effects occurred in 6 patients, and all were treated successfully. The findings suggest that selected groups of patients with rheumatologic disease can safely receive potentially life-saving cancer treatments.

"Based on our observations, [immune checkpoint inhibitor](#) therapy should be considered in select patients with pre-existing rheumatologic [disease](#)," said senior author Dr. Uma Thanarajasingam, of the Mayo Clinic.

"However, there is an immediate and pressing need for prospective, and ideally multi-center trials to study rheumatic patients who go on to need immune checkpoint inhibitor therapy - both to better understand their safety profile in this under-studied patient group, as well as elucidate risk factors and biomarkers for the development of immune-related adverse effects."

More information: Michael D. Richter et al, Cancer immunotherapy

in patients with preexisting rheumatologic disease: the Mayo Clinic experience, *Arthritis & Rheumatology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1002/art.40397](https://doi.org/10.1002/art.40397)

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