

## GLP-1s are shrinking bodies. Cadaver fat is plugging the gap

Leah Dolan | July 13, 2026



Sandra\*, a 43-year-old media lawyer based in Los Angeles, had been toying with the idea of breast augmentation since her 20s, but was always put off by the pain of the procedure, the long recovery time and the idea of having “this kind of foreign sac in your body.”

So when Sandra, who wanted to protect her identity for privacy reasons, heard about a new injectable body contouring product last summer, she was intrigued. No synthetic fillers, no implanted sacs, no downtime.

“You hit a certain age and you decide, I’m going to do something for myself at this point,” she said. The product she found — alloClae, pronounced allo-clay like the earthy sculpting material — is quick to administer. Nicknamed the lunchtime boob-job, it often takes less than an hour to inject and doesn’t need general anaesthesia or a hospital setting. Plus, the aftercare instructions, Sandra said, were “shockingly easy.” The fact that alloClae uses fat harvested from donated dead bodies, or cadavers as they’re referred to in the scientific community, didn’t really pose an issue. “I was fine with that,” she said.

A growing number of people in the US appear to feel the same. Tiger Aesthetics, the company that manufactures alloClae, said more than 2,000 patients have been injected with it since May 2025. It’s a buzzy topic on Reddit’s popular plastic surgery page, as potential patients ask questions, seek reviews and swap doctor recommendations.

In 2026, it’s clear that what once might have been classed as body modification is now seen simply as body maintenance. It has never been easier, or more mundane, to drastically alter one’s physical form. Rib remodeling. Upper blepharoplasty. Lower blepharoplasty. Mid-facelift. Lower

facelift. Deep-plane facelift. As science and surgical technique progress ad nauseam, so does our appetite for new curves, tighter skin, sharper jawlines.

AlloClae — one of the more inventive products in this category— is our latest reminder. But for every plastic surgery clinic calling the injectable a “next-generation” advancement, there’s an equal number of headlines branding it “zombie filler” or “corpse injections.”

If there is a boundary line in the pursuit of the perfect look, are we finally butting up against it? What does it mean if society widely embraces injecting cadaver fat in the service of beauty? Could alloClae become as common as Botox?

In the end, your opinion of alloClae might depend on your opinion of death.

## The Ozempic effect

AlloClae was first released in the US in 2024 to board-certified plastic surgeons with a track record of working with fat, and since January to a wider net of doctors including “mid-level providers” like physicians assistants, nurse practitioners and aesthetic nurses. (Tiger Aesthetics said it trains nurse practitioners, who are not permitted to inject into the breast, on special injection technique.)

Dr. Luis Macias, a double-board-certified plastic surgeon in LA who was one of a select few doctors to receive alloClae early, has witnessed the product’s rising popularity first-hand. “I have to buy a lot of syringes at a time, and talk to the rep constantly about it,” he said in a phone interview. “I feel like I’m talking to my Porsche dealer... It’s ridiculous.” The price for one 12.5cc syringe of the soft tissue corrector can run up to roughly \$2,250.

Marketed as “off-the-shelf” fat, or “bottled fat grafting,” as one PR email put it, alloClae is touted as an alternative to autologous fat grafting — where a patient’s own fat is removed via liposuction and transferred into another area.



The product has been described as off-the-shelf fat, or bottled fat grafting. *Photo Illustration by Connie Chen/CNN*

It isn't the first product in this area of cosmetics. **Renuva**, a similar shelf-stable cadaver fat injectable made by not-for-profit organization MTF Biologics, first launched around a decade ago. The key difference between the two, Macias said, is volume. Because Renuva's maximum syringe size is just 3ccs, it was commonly used in smaller areas like the hands, face and neck, whereas the largest syringe of alloClae can hold around 22cc of more product. "It's a little chunkier," said Macias. "A little firmer."

In the age of GLP-1s where bodies seem to be shrinking left and right, donated cadaver fat is plugging an emerging gap in the market. Around 11% of Americans are currently on medications such as Ozempic and Wegovy for weight loss, according to a report published this month. Macias says a number of his patients on GLP-1s are keen to add fat back into their bodies, now that they can spot treat areas and design their silhouette. "They want it back in the breast and buttocks, in the face," he said. "Those are very common areas that we're re-volumizing after we get rid of the excess skin."

Caroline Van Hove, president of Tiger Aesthetics, agreed the rise in these drugs has been "complementary" to alloClae. "What these patients are finding is that as they've lost quite substantial amounts of weight, it's also left them disfigured in certain areas where they have lost real targeted volume," she said over Zoom. "In areas that, in their opinion, define their femininity."

To meet the booming demand, Van Hove said the company is scaling up production, which might sound difficult for a company that relies entirely on the donation of dead bodies. Macias says he's yet to see a patient bat an eyelid at where the fat comes from. "Maybe it's because of the market I'm in," he said. "Los Angeles, right?"

## Cadaver ethics

Do families, and donors, know their bodies can be used in this way? The short answer is not always.

Organ and whole body donation are often understood as the ultimate selfless acts — a grieving family using their loss to improve someone else's life, or further scientific research.

Organ donation is relatively straightforward — in the US it is tightly controlled by federal law. But whole body donation and non-transplant human tissue banks are a different story. Regulation varies by state and there is currently no mandatory federal accreditation or licensing requirement for either body donation organizations or non-transplant tissue banks, which are not regulated by the US Food and Drug Administration. This means there is largely no federal oversight of the hundreds of facilities receiving tens of thousands of gifted dead bodies per year.

Still, Van Hove called whole body donation a "stringent and highly regulated area." She said Tiger Aesthetics only has contracts with tissue banks connected with the *Association for Advancing Tissue and Biologics* — a voluntary accrediting body established in 1976 with the aim of increasing public trust by providing additional scrutiny to the donation process. Donors "have to complete a very extensive dossier releasing their consents," Van Hove said, adding that it can take between 3 and 6 months to "clear" a donor's medical record and approve the anatomical gift. "Obviously the form does not say 'Do you want to donate your organs or tissue to alloClae?'" she said. "But it allows the donor to really indicate whether or not they want it exclusively for investigative research, medical research or if they're also allowing for-profit purposes and so on, or if they have no restrictions at all."



AlloClare is particularly popular with GLP-1 users, who want to add fat back into specific areas after weight loss.  
*Photo Illustration by Connie Chen/CNN*

Whether it's ethical is another question, especially since families of donors are not compensated for their loved one's body. "It really is betraying altruism to make money," Arthur Caplan, professor of bioethics at NYU's Grossman School of Medicine, said of the industry more generally in a video call. "I think that's an ethics problem."

In terms of increasing production, Tiger Aesthetics told CNN they are partnering with more tissue banks across the US to access extra cadavers and plan to widen the age criteria for eligible donors. But its efforts to scale were somewhat disrupted this summer when the New York State Health Department denied the product's distribution. New York is one of the few states in the country which require non-transplant tissue banks and those distributing, processing, storing or collecting human tissue to hold a license. According to recent court filings, the Department of Health rejected a license for alloClare manufacturers in October 2024 on the grounds that it was "unclear" whether the injectable was "in compliance with FDA requirements" and again in May 2026 because "the tissue bank owners, controlling parties, medical director or tissue bank director do not have the character and competence to ensure that the facility is competently operated in accordance with the law." Tiger, who insists its product is "lawfully regulated" by the FDA, has filed a lawsuit against the Department of Health which it believes does not have the authority to block the product. The company is seeking damages of at least \$500,000 for lost revenue and a declaration from the court that the "New York Tissue Bank regulatory scheme does not apply to adipose tissue-derived products" like alloClare, among other relief.

### **'Oily, chunky and yellow'**

When asked about the question of donated cadaver fat, Jackelin Cruz, a patient of Macias, said she initially found it "a little bit weird." But she was comforted by the fact that, according to Tiger Aesthetics, the donor's DNA is removed in the manufacturing process.

Cruz, a 60-year-old stay-at-home mom living in LA was waiting in Macias' clinic for her usual Botox and lasers appointment when she saw a pamphlet for alloClare. She had already thought

about adding volume to her buttocks — sometimes, she felt shy even walking in front of her husband and preferred to tie a sweater around her waist — but Macias told her she was too lean for a traditional Brazilian butt lift, also known as a BBL. Even if she had enough fat reserves, Cruz didn't like the sound of the surgery's recovery. Instead, she was "sold" on alloClae's minimal downtime, and the idea that her desired shape could be built up slowly with the injectable over a few sessions. In the end, she had two rounds costing just under \$50,000 altogether. She loved the result of her alloClae treatment so much, she's considering using it in other areas of her body.

Sandra, meanwhile, spent \$13,000 for 50cc of alloClae in each breast. She thought it was a good deal, thanks to a volume discount from her surgeon. But she ended up facing complications. Around two months after her breast augmentation, Sandra said her right side became painful, and the skin was turning yellow-brown and purple like a bruise. She said she could feel lumps in her breast, and was eventually told by her surgeon she had something called fat necrosis. The injected fat wasn't able to vascularize — the process where new blood vessels form and increase blood supply to the area — and was now dying inside her body. One time after showering, Sandra said she noticed yellow fluid seeping out of the injection site of her right breast. "It very much looked like the alloClae," she said. "It looked oily, chunky and yellow."

According to Van Hove, Tiger Aesthetics does not have any confirmed cases of graft rejection or infection of alloClae. She said she could not comment on the details of Sandra's experience, which would have been handled by the company's quality assurance team, but added that injecting "technique is very important."

Both Van Hove and Dr. Krishna Vyas, a plastic surgeon based in New York, said that standard fat grafting with your own biology also poses a risk of necrosis, though any further evaluation is difficult since there are currently no direct comparison studies between the two techniques. While Vyas noted that the product seemed "low risk," he is hesitant to use it in his own practice before more robust clinical trials with long term follow-up data are published.

Sandra's cysts were successfully aspirated, but she said she can still feel some lumps in her chest and was, ironically, told she may need surgery to remove any remaining alloClae.



Caroline Van Hove, president of alloClae's manufacturer Tiger Aesthetics, is behind some of the most recognisable injectables on the market. Her career includes PR for Botox and Juvéderm, two products that have been re-shaping faces for decades.

*Photo Illustration by Connie Chen/CNN/berkpixels/fStop/Getty Images*

## The new Botox?

When he first began working with Renuva and alloClae, Macias steeled himself against what he expected would be widespread horror at the idea of “putting dead people’s fat into people.”

“For some reason,” he said. “I haven’t had to really explain it that much.”

Arabelle Sicardi, a cultural critic and author of “The House of Beauty: Lessons from the Image Industry,” called alloClae “horrifically convenient,” likening it to something in the universe of Coralie Fargeat’s 2024 body horror film, “The Substance.”

Sicardi thought the lack of downtime or recovery added to a kind of cognitive dissonance regarding the product’s ingredient list. “It says that we’re prioritizing convenience with materials of the dead,” Sicardi said. “This is just a new version of an ancient impulse. People used to eat dead bodies. Now we’re shooting them into our bodies.”

But Van Hove is confident about the injectable’s future success. And she has reason to be, having held a career at the forefront of the medical aesthetics industry for decades. She has helped to launch two of the most recognizable products in the cosmetics world: Botox and Juvéderm. Fillers, Botox, lasers, needling, “all those things at one point or another were considered extreme because they were new,” Van Hove said. “I think all of those products should be considered as they’re helping mental well-being and self-confidence.”

Rather than representing human expiration, she sees alloClae as a sort of cosmetic lifeblood. “People are also looking for ways to not only live longer and live better, but also to look and feel their very best as they’re extending their own life span,” Van Hove said.

“Why do everything possible to live a longer life when you feel that the outside doesn’t really project the inner youth that you’ve strived for.”

<https://www.cnn.com/2026/07/13/style/alloclae-glp-1-cadaver-fat-interview>

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