

THE WINE INFORMATION COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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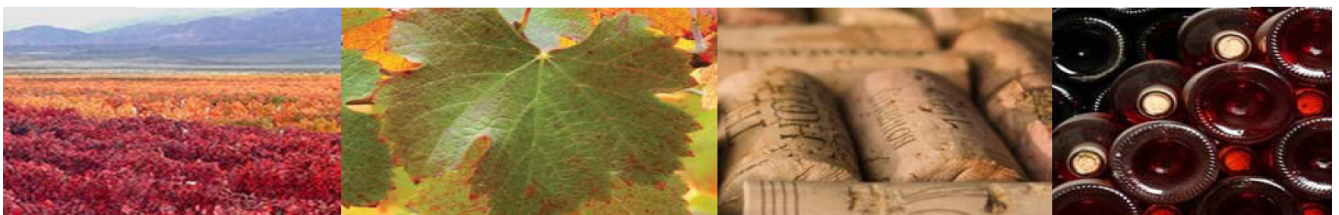
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SCIENTIFIC NEWS

Mediterranean diet – Heart-Healthy for Life

Moderate daily consumption of alcoholic beverages, mainly in the form of wine and usually with meals, is considered part of a Mediterranean diet and lifestyle. Researchers from Harokopio University of Athens carried out a meta-analysis of 50 studies with approximately half a million subjects. They found that adherence to a Mediterranean dietary pattern had beneficial effects with regards to the risk of metabolic syndrome and associated components such as waist circumference, high density lipoprotein and triglyceride levels, blood pressure as well as glucose metabolism. Moreover, the greater the adherence to the traditional dietary pattern, the more favourable the effects on the metabolic syndrome components. The authors concluded that these results are of considerable public health importance, because this dietary pattern can be easily adopted by all population groups and various cultures and cost-effectively serve for the primary and secondary prevention of the metabolic syndrome.

Kastorini CM, Milionis HJ, Esposito K, et al. The effect of Mediterranean diet on metabolic syndrome and its components: a meta-analysis of 50 studies and 534,906 individuals', Journal of the American College of Cardiology 2011;57:1299-1313.

To read the full abstract on the WIC website, click [here](#).

Moderate Intake of Alcoholic Beverages May Stave off Dementia

A new German study including 3,202 subjects (75+ years) free of dementia attending general practitioners, examined the consumption of alcoholic beverages and DSM-IV dementia diagnoses at baseline, after 1.5 years and after 3 years. Detailed assessments of current alcohol intake and dementia diagnosis were obtained during a clinical interview. The association between alcohol consumption (in grams of ethanol), type of alcoholic beverage (wine, beer, mixed alcohol beverages) and incident dementia was investigated. After controlling for a number of potential confounders, current intake of alcoholic beverages was related to a 29% decrease in overall dementia and a 42% decrease in Alzheimer incidence, respectively. With regards to quantity and type of alcohol, all hazard ratios were lower in moderate drinkers than in abstinent individuals. The authors concluded that in agreement with previous meta-analyses that included younger age groups, their results suggest that light-to-moderate intake of alcoholic beverages is inversely related to incident dementia, also among individuals aged 75 years and older.

Weyerer S, Schaufele M, Wiese B et al. Current alcohol consumption and its relationship to incident dementia: results from a 3-year follow-up study among primary care attenders aged 75 years and older. Age and Ageing, Published early online 02 March 2011

To read the full abstract on the WIC website, click [here](#).

Reduced Risk of Acute Coronary Syndrome in Moderate Drinkers

High intake of alcoholic beverages is associated with hypertension, which in turn is a strong risk factor of acute coronary syndrome (ACS). Scientists from the Centre for Alcohol Research at the National Institute of Public Health (University of Southern Denmark, Copenhagen, Denmark) examined whether middle-aged men and women with hypertension may benefit from a light to moderate intake of alcoholic beverages with regards to their risk of ACS and overall mortality. They used data from 57,053 men and women, aged 50-64,

who participated in the Danish Diet, Cancer and Health study. The results showed that moderate alcohol consumption was associated with a lower risk of ACS among participants with and without hypertension. Also, those individuals who drank moderately had a lower total mortality than abstainers and those who drank excessively. These findings indicate that a light to moderate intake of alcoholic beverages has similar preventive effects on the risk of ACS in men and women with and without hypertension.

Lindschou Hansen J, Tolstrup JS, Jensen MK et al.(2011) Alcohol intake and risk of acute coronary syndrome and mortality in men and women with and without hypertension. Published early online Eur J Epidemiol. 2011 Mar 19;

To read the full abstract on the WIC website, click [here](#).

Moderate Wine Intake is not Associated with Pancreatic Cancer

Data from the Cancer Prevention Study II, a prospective study of US adults 30 years and older were analysed to investigate the association between the consumption of alcoholic beverages and pancreatic cancer. During 24 years of follow-up, 6847 pancreatic cancer deaths occurred among the 1 030 467 participants. Researchers from the American Cancer Society in Atlanta observed no relationship between moderate wine consumption and an increased risk of pancreatic cancer mortality. This association was seen in never smokers as well as in ever smokers.

Gapstur SM, Jacobs EJ, Deka A et al. Association of alcohol intake with pancreatic cancer mortality in never smokers. Arch Intern Med 2011;171:444-451.

To read the full abstract on the WIC website, click [here](#).

FEATURE ARTICLE

Moderate Drinking – Part of a Preventive Lifestyle

Possible cardio-protective effects of a moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages seen in observational studies continue to be intensely debated in the medical literature and popular media. As it is not feasible to conduct “blind” randomized clinical trials to evaluate the effects of moderate alcohol intake on cardiovascular outcomes such as heart attack, cardiac death or other cardiovascular diseases (CVD) in humans, results of epidemiological and experimental studies have to be interpreted. Thus, best judgement will be based on carefully done observational studies, research into potential biological mechanisms of observed effects and studies of intermediate outcomes that are in pathways and processes in the development of the disease.

In an excellent summary, an international research team from three universities¹ examined results from 84 longitudinal cohort studies from all over the world comparing drinkers of alcoholic beverages with non-drinkers for the outcomes of overall mortality and mortality from cardiovascular disease (CVD), coronary heart disease (CHD) and stroke as well as incident coronary heart disease and incident stroke. Meta-analyses for each of these outcomes were performed. The researchers carefully accounted for the heterogeneity within the reference group of non-drinkers and examined the effect of confounding on the strength of observed associations.

As result, the cardiovascular mortality risk for drinkers of alcoholic beverages compared to non-drinkers was significantly reduced by 25%. Dose-response analysis revealed that the lowest risk of coronary heart disease mortality occurred with 15-30 g of alcohol a day but for stroke mortality \leq 15 g of alcohol a day. Very importantly, with regards to all cause mortality, drinkers had an advantage compared to abstinent individuals: up to 15 g/day, their total mortality risk was 13% lower. The scientists concluded that light to moderate alcohol consumption is associated with a reduced risk of multiple cardiovascular outcomes and further, they suggested that current scientific data satisfy the Hill criteria (3) indicating causality (see in detail below). It can be assumed that the intake of alcoholic beverages is causally related to the lower risk of cardiovascular disease among moderate drinkers.

Thousands of basic science studies have been carried out showing that administering alcohol or wine results in beneficial effects on cellular and biological markers associated with the risk of atherosclerosis and heart disease. Thus, in a companion paper (2), the researchers systematically reviewed 63 controlled interventional studies in humans investigating whether the protective effects of alcohol on reducing risk factors for CVD in observational studies are plausible. The results of this meta-analysis showed that moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages (up to 15 g alcohol a day for women and up to 30 g alcohol a day for men) has beneficial effects on a variety of biomarkers linked to the risk of coronary heart disease:

- high density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol and adiponectin were significantly increased
- fibrinogen was significantly decreased

The findings described in the two combined meta-analyses provide the most thorough examination of the literature and strengthen the case for a causal link between alcohol intake and a reduced risk of coronary heart disease, suggesting that the lower risk of heart disease observed among moderate drinkers is caused by the alcoholic beverage itself, and not by other associated lifestyle factors. **Now the evidence is better than ever before: regular moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages can provide health benefits.**

¹ University of Calgary (Canada), University of Texas (USA), Harvard University (USA)

The authors concluded that given the consistency observed in their findings and data on possible mechanisms pointing to causation in the companion review, additional observational studies will have limited value. In their opinion, debate should rather centre now on how to integrate this evidence into clinical practice and public health messages:

"In the realm of clinical practice, the evidence could form a foundation for proposing counselling for selected patients to incorporate moderate amounts of alcohol into their diets for improving their coronary heart disease risk. With respect to public health messages, there may now be an impetus to better communicate to the public that alcoholic beverages, in moderation, may have overall health benefits that outweigh the risks in selected subsets of patients... Any such strategy would need to be accompanied by rigorous study and oversight of impacts. One approach would be to undertake public health messaging pilot studies on well defined target populations (such as a workplace or in a small jurisdiction) to permit detailed evaluation of effects on measures such as knowledge, attitudes, self reported drinking behaviours, and perhaps, secondarily, health outcomes."

1. Ronksley PE, Brien SE, Turner BJ, et al. Association of alcohol consumption with selected cardiovascular disease outcomes: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ*. 2011 Feb 22;342:d671. doi: 10.1136/bmj.d671.
2. Brien SE, Ronksley PE, Turner BJ, et al. Effect of alcohol consumption on biological markers associated with risk of coronary heart disease: systematic review and meta-analysis of interventional studies. *BMJ*. 2011 Feb 22;342:d636. doi: 10.1136/bmj.d636
3. Hill, Austin Bradford (1965). "The environment and disease: association or causation?". *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* 58: 295–300.

Bradford Hill criteria:

To assess causal evidence in epidemiological or observational studies, certain guidelines are used (Bradford-Hill criteria) (3). These criteria were very well demonstrated in the current meta-analyses.

Bradford Hill criteria	Results of current meta-analyses
<p>Temporality Exposure always precedes the outcome; the effect has to occur after the cause.</p>	<p>The authors could demonstrate that with intake of alcoholic beverages cardiovascular disease was prevented.</p>
<p>Biological dose-response Greater exposure should be associated to the effect in a dose-related manner. If a dose-response relationship is present, it is strong evidence for a causal relationship.</p>	<p>The researchers observed a greater protective association with increasing dose, except that it seemed to be offset somewhat by negative associations with the risk of haemorrhagic stroke.</p>
<p>Consistency Consistent findings observed by different persons in different places with different populations strengthen the likelihood of an effect.</p>	<p>The protective association of alcohol was consistently observed in diverse patient populations and in both women and men.</p>
<p>Specificity A causal link is likely if an association is found in a specific population at a specific site and disease with no other likely explanation. The more specific an association between a factor and an effect is, the bigger the probability of a causal relationship.</p>	<p>The observed association in the meta-analyses is specific: moderate drinking (up to 15 g alcohol per day for women and 30 g alcohol per day for men) is associated with lower rates of cardiovascular disease but is not uniformly protective for other conditions, such as cancer.</p>
<p>Biological plausibility The association agrees with currently accepted understanding of pathological processes.</p>	<p>Favourable changes in several cardiovascular biomarkers provide support for a protective effect of alcohol.</p>
<p>Consideration of alternative explanations: In judging whether a reported association is causal, it is necessary to determine the extent to which researchers have taken other possible explanations into account and have effectively ruled out such alternative explanations.</p>	<p>The reduction in risk is notable even when controlling for known confounders (such as smoking, diet, and exercise). Thus any potential unmeasured confounder would need to be very strong to justify the apparently protective association.</p>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wine and Food Tourism First European Conference, Volterra (Pisa), 13-15 April 2011

In recent years, issues of wine and food tourism have come to the fore in much public debate and policymaking as well as in the academy world. Research in wine and food tourism have accelerated over the last years and it is crucial at this stage to focus on the results of the different approaches, to try to give a broad picture of the state of the art, and to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas.

For these reasons, ScuolaSuperioreSant'Anna, together with AssociazioneNazionaleCittà del Vino, and DipartimentodiAgronomia e Gestionedell'Ecosistema, invite to participate in the "First European Conference on Wine and Food Tourism" to be held in Volterra on the 13-15 April 2011.

For more information: www.wineandfoodtourism.it

Round Table: Binge drinking or Art de Vivre or is there anything in between? 12 May 2011 Berlin, Germany

Prevention of alcohol misuse - Where does the responsibility of the politicians, the wine sector and society start and where does it end? This controversial topic will be discussed by different stakeholders.

Participants of the round table include:

J. Busse (German Advertising Standards Council, Berlin)

Dr. S. Etgeton (Federal Consumer Protection Association, Berlin)

Dr. T. Holzer (Department of the German Drug Commissioner, Federal Ministry of Health, Berlin),

Dr. R. Nickenig (German Wine Growers' Association, Bonn)

Prof. N. Worm (University for Prevention and Health Management, Saarbrücken)

For more information, please contact: Margit Lawen, lawen@deutscheweinakademie.de

Public Health International Conference 2011 "Health and Wellbeing – the 21st Century Agenda", 8-9 September 2011, LondonUK

The journal *Public Health* is holding its second international conference in September 2011. Taking as its theme health and wellbeing, the conference will explore the relationships between health, wellbeing and the factors which influence them in a global environment. Come and join us in refocusing the agenda on health and wellbeing as we move forward into the second decade of the 21st century.

For more information, please contact: Claire Robins, crobins@rsph.org.uk

In order to ensure objectivity, the articles in this newsletter have been selected using the Australia New Zealand Food Authority (ANZFA) levels of evidence for interpreting nutrition research.

For further information on the selection criteria:

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As a commitment to promote responsibility and moderation in the consumption of alcoholic beverages and reduce the harmful use of alcohol, the “Wine Information Council (WIC)” is intended to be a, sound, science driven source of information aimed at providing consistent, objective and balanced information on Health, Social and Cultural Aspects of the consumption of wines.

The WIC gathers such information through a database developed on the basis of existing international scientific specialised sources and is updated under the supervision of a scientific advisory board. This information is available on-line to all stakeholders and the public at large www.wineinformationcouncil.eu. The WIC also provides information on «best practices» and initiatives promoting responsible drinking patterns which are being deployed across the EU in the framework of the “Wine in Moderation, Art de Vivre” Programme www.wineinmoderation.eu.

*The Wine Information Council is part of the Wine in Moderation programme
www.wineinmoderation.eu*

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