

The Problem: Drinking to get drunk

Our headlines have been dominated this year, or infact for several years by our binge culture, whereby 18 - 25 year olds in particular may drink very little, or nothing during the week and then go out specifically to 'get plastered' on a Friday and Saturday night. This culture crosses all classes, income groups, the sexes and most ethnic groups. It is a culture that is particularly strong in Scandinavia, the UK, Ireland and to a lesser degree in the US. However even Mediterranean countries where traditional patterns of drinking have been much healthier have become implicated with the emergence of the 'botellon' in Spain. A botellon is a boozey party held in a public place, where often underage participants drink in an unregulated environment.

Hence bingeing and under -age drinking have become strongly linked in the public and official eye, as has the association of alcohol and violence and anti-social behaviour - all of which give drinking alcohol a reputation the industry must disassociate itself from. The industry was given an ultimatum by Commissioner David Byrne at the WHO conference on alcohol and young people in Stockholm in January 2001 to show by the end of this year that it could put strong measures in place to prove that its advertising does not appeal to those under age and that its branding does not promote a culture of excess or of sexual prowess, or legislation will follow. The WHO conference in May 2002 on self regulation of alcohol advertising again called on governments to regulate advertising and was heavily critical of the industry. Most recently the British Medical Association has called for a ban on alcohol adverts due to 'the worrying increase in binge drinking among the young'.

Action from individual countries, such as the Ukraine and most notably the traditionally liberal Ireland to stem the increase in binge-drinking by introducing a raft of measures (see report on page 3) including the regulation of advertising has sent shockwaves around the world and provided a much needed wake up call to some companies whose advertising campaigns have

been sailing close to wind over the last year. A survey of global public opinion of different industries commissioned by Heineken reflects public suspicion of beverage alcohol company ethics/motivation rating it at -18%, below the chemical, oil and pharmaceutical companies. Only tobacco rated lower.

The industry and its associations have worked hard over the last few years to emphasise the importance of patterns of drinking and the context of drinking. This separates the idea of drinking, and specifically drinking in moderation - at meal times, in a civilised context from the damaging patterns of excess over the weekend. Research shows clearly that binge drinking is extremely damaging, a survey carried out by Finland's national Public Health Institute tracked 5000 men over 10 years and found that drinking 6 or more beers in one session increased your risk of dying young by more than half. After 10 years the death rate of binge-drinkers was 75% higher, the main killer being heart disease followed by liver disease. How to change this ingrained behaviour, where getting drunk is rated higher than socialising or enjoyment will not be easy. However, the UK and US has succeeded in turning drink-driving into a social taboo over the last twenty years, so there is no reason why - with imagination, determination and of course funds, a current social norm can be deemed 'uncool' in time.

Allied Domecq has paved the way for promoting moderation as a key part of its marketing and advertising with the launch of Tia Lusso last year, whose sensible drinking strap line is ' you just know to drink in moderation', similarly Ballantynes whisky message is 'play better, play in moderation'. The tremendous success of Tia Lusso, leaping to number two in the cream liqueur market in 12 months, showed that a responsible approach to marketing and product launch has no ill effect on sales was an important lesson. They have since extended messages to Malibu and Makers Mark.

The news that Diageo have now launched a sensible drinking campaign in the UK (it has already run in the US) through such a main stream brand as Smirnoff is excellent news. The witty campaign which features a couple having dinner to celebrate their engagement when a

'friend' turns up and regales Cindy with tales of Hank's wild bachelor past. The strapline is 'knowing when to stop is a good thing'. £2 million funds have been earmarked for the UK.

The fact that two of the most important global beverage alcohol companies are putting social responsibility at the heart of their policy is a good start and combined with initiatives for better design in pubs, unbreakable glasses, better public transport at night, better trained bar staff together with imaginative and interactive education and publicity perhaps the damaging (both to the industry and the participants) pattern of binge-drinking can be turned around.

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News from around the world

Thailand

Several organizations and politicians are calling for tighter controls on alcohol advertising in response to rising alcohol consumption in the country over the past 10 years. Ampon Jinda, director of the National Health System Reform Office (HSRO), expressed support in June for a proposal by Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister, Chaturon Chaisang, to ban all radio and TV ads for alcoholic drinks between 5:00am and 10:00pm. The Thai Cabinet has now approved plans to ban TV and radio advertising for alcoholic and energy drinks between 5am and 10pm from 1 October and will also include a complete ban on cinema advertising.

The proposals also include a ban on alcohol being promoted by actors, singers and sportsmen and women. The ban seems unlikely to affect sports broadcasts when drinks sponsors are involved provided certain conditions are met. "Sports sponsoring using logos is still allowed as long as the alcohol firms do not say drinking is good for people," Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, said after the Cabinet meeting. In addition, alcohol sales would be banned at petrol stations and convenience stores in response to rising levels of drink-driving. HSRO statistics indicated that 60% of road fatalities were drink-related. Jinda said that alcohol consumption had more than doubled over the past 10 years to 1.604 billion litres per year.

UK

The UK Portman Group's independent complaints panel has condemned FCUK spirit fruit vodka drink for appealing to the under 18's. The panel has also asked UK retailers not to stock the controversial Roxoff 'viagrapop', which claims to increase libido. In another ruling, the Panel upheld complaints against the website www.wkd.co.uk which has strong sexual content and was deemed to appeal to under 18's in support of the vodka based drink WKD.

Ukraine

The Ukrainian parliament passed a law in July that bans most alcohol and tobacco advertising on television, radio and in print media. The move follows calls from deputies that both substances are damaging to health. The bill imposes a blanket ban on tobacco advertising and restricts alcohol advertising on television and in printed media as well as on billboards and transport.

France

As part of the public health policy currently being drafted for 2004-2008, the French government aims to reduce alcohol consumption by 20% and make alcohol abuse less prevalent in French society. This is part of a 100- point draft bill, which was to be presented to the cabinet in July.

Although any attempt at reducing alcohol misuse is laudable, achieving it by seeking to enforce a blanket reduction in drinking rather than by targeting specific areas of misuse- specifically drink-driving in France, is generally considered to be an inefficient means to an end comments La Journee Vinicole.

Romania

The Romanian Government has increased excise tax on alcohol, cigarettes and oil. The new rates will come into force from the first of July this year. Excise duties on ethyl alcohol and distilled alcoholic beverages will rise to 150 Euros (US\$172.8) per hectolitre of pure alcohol, from the current 108.4 Euros.

Beer tax will also increase as will wine tax with sparkling wines and special wines bearing excise duties of 2.80 euros per hl per alcohol degree. But excise duties on non-sparkling wines will be reduced to 0.30 euro per hl per alcohol degree from the current 0.55.

Russia

Russian Brewers' filed a lawsuit against tax authorities in May for publicly advocating an excise duty hike on beer. OAO Baltika Brewery, ZAO Ochakovo and ZAO Vena have all filed a suit to the Moscow Court of Arbitration.

Vladimir Gubanov, head of department of alcohol and tobacco taxation indicated in April that the January 25% rise in exercise duty was needed in order that the government can receive more in tax revenues. Baltika, the country's largest brewer, is owned by Baltic Beverage Holding, a joint venture between Carlsberg A/S and Scottish & Newcastle PLC. Russia's second-largest brewer Sun Interbrew Ltd, a unit of Belgium's Interbrew S/A, hasn't joined the other Russian brewers.

Alcohol sponsorship and advertising to be regulated in Ireland

Alarmed that Ireland has become one of the hardest-drinking countries in Europe, the Irish government announced at the end of May that it plans to require health warnings on alcoholic drinks and limit advertising of alcoholic drinks. Prime Minister Bertie Ahern insisted in a speech to European brewers in Dublin that he believed young people were exposed to saturation marketing of alcohol, which he said was fuelling a the "drink to get drunk" culture. Similarly, the Minister for Justice Michael McDowell. Speaking at the Progressive Democrats annual conference in Galway, gave warning that tighter legislation could be introduced to tackle the problem of public drunkenness. "It is already illegal for publicans to allow people to become drunk on their premises and I am planning a stricter enforcement of this law," he said.

The government plans to ban alcohol ads from buses, trains, cinemas and sporting events involving young people, while no ads for beer or other alcoholic beverages would be permitted before 10 p.m. on Irish television, currently such ads currently face few restrictions and Guinness sponsors the national soccer squad and Heineken the rugby. Currently more than 10,000 pubs serve a population of 3.8 million. Health warnings on beer, wine and liquor would require approval from the European Commission, but Ahern said he expected the EU's support in tackling what he called "serious social problems arising from greatly increased levels of alcohol abuse." Together, the commitments represent as significant a shift in official attitudes to Irish traditions as the government's recent commitment to outlaw smoking in pubs.

Anti-alcohol campaigners and Ireland's major pub owners association welcomed the moves, as well as Ahern's call for pubs to stop selling sweet, heavy-alcohol "slammers" and "alcopops," which appeal to novice drinkers. "These drinks encourage binge drinking among young people which is fast becoming the curse of modern society," said Tadh O'Sullivan, chief executive of the Vintners Federation of Ireland, which represents 6,000 pubs - many of which sell the drinks. The Irish have long been stereotyped as heavy drinkers, but past surveys have suggested the reputation was undeserved and Ireland was actually one of Europe's more moderate drinking nations. In the past decade, however, figures show that this has changed. World Drinks Trends 2002 placed Ireland second only to Luxembourg in the EU in per-capita volume of alcohol consumed, at 2.85

gallons of pure alcohol each year. The US average was 1.77 gallons. The surge coincides with Ireland's quick-changing fortunes in the 1990s, when it went from an economic backwater of Europe with double-digit unemployment to a booming economy and tourism.

The UK government is considering a new set of regulations for alcohol advertising.

Following a series of ads that breached both good taste and the guidelines of the industry's marketing regulator, the UK government is considering regulating all alcohol advertising, current alcohol advertising attitudes will have to change radically to avoid a clampdown it states.

It will be difficult for some alcohol manufacturers to deny that the government has a case. Recently, some advertising agencies have been pushing the limits of the law, using the loophole of creating very sexual adverts without an overt link to the product. While this may not be a technical infringement, it has alarmed consumers as well as groups such as Alcohol Concern. The government is also beginning to take notice and is proposing a new set of regulations, including banning alcohol adverts before 9 pm. Currently the UK has some of the most liberal alcohol advertising laws in Europe.

However, the industry is keen to retain its powers of self-regulation monitored by The Portman Group, which has shown that it is prepared to take strong action to discourage the current trend. Recently, it ruled an alcopop from FCUK unacceptable due to the brand's strong following among teenagers. Similarly, it has condemned the release of the controversial 'Roxsoff', a new alcopop containing aphrodisiac herbs and which is to be marketed as "creating a generation of randy superbeings".

News that 12 alcoholics from Scotland plan to sue drinks companies for failing to warn them adequately of the dangers of consuming alcohol has further fuelled the debate "Any litigation would have to be based on whether or not the product causes harm and whether or not the producer has a duty of care to customers," said Ross Harper, their solicitors. The case brings new exposure re health warnings on alcohol containers in the UK. The British Medical Association has repeatedly called for them to be made mandatory.

World cancer report

The World Cancer Report was launched in April and provides a global overview of the trends and developments in cancer incidence, mortality and causality. It also sheds light on WHO's cancer control strategies and on a variety of prevention measures thought to be effective. Alcohol consumption is identified as belonging to a series of causes of cancer. The World Cancer Report said "There is an increasing recognition of the causative role of lifestyle factors, including diet, physical activity, and alcohol consumption".

This report together with another IARC publication "Nutrition and Lifestyle: Opportunities for Cancer Prevention" and the joint WHO/FAO Expert Report on Diet, "Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Disease" contribute to the general consultative process that will culminate with the formulation of a Global Strategy on Diet, Physical activity and health, to be considered by the World Health assembly in 2004.

Direct Wine Shipment break through in US

"A 139-page report released by the Federal Trade Commission will forever change the terms of debate on the direct shipment issue, and will have an extraordinary impact on state legislatures and the federal courts in the months ahead," states WineAmerica President David Sloane. "This report makes clear that the interstate shipment of wine is beneficial to consumers, that states can and are effectively regulating such sales, and that the arguments against direct shipment simply do not hold up under scrutiny," he continued. "Wine consumers and wineries all over America should know that their voices have finally been heard on this issue, and that the federal agency charged with safeguarding competition and protecting consumers has firmly come down on our side," he concluded.

The report entitled, "Possible anti-competitive Barriers to E-Commerce: Wine" stems from a public workshop held last October by the FTC, which examined state barriers to e-commerce for a number of popular consumer products, including wine. The FTC press release can be found at <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2003/07/wine.htm>. The full report via <http://www.ftc.gov/os/2003/07/winereport2.pdf>.

No clear link between alcohol and Parkinson's disease

While some research suggests alcohol drinkers have a lower risk of Parkinson's disease than abstainers, a study published in May suggests no clear association between drinking and Parkinson's disease with the exception of moderate beer intake which might offer some protection. Because no alcohol other than beer was tied to a lower Parkinson's risk, researchers suspect that a beer ingredient other than alcohol might bestow the benefit. Their report is published in the on-line edition of the *Annals of Neurology*.

Over the past few decades, researchers have debated whether cigarettes, coffee and alcohol can help stave off Parkinson's disease, a movement disorder that arises from the loss of brain cells that produce the chemical dopamine. Several recent studies have produced strong evidence that cigarette smokers and caffeine consumers have some protection against Parkinson's, and researchers believe it's biologically plausible that tobacco smoke and caffeine might shield brain cells from the damage that marks the disease. But there is another possibility. Some scientists have suggested that the absence of these addictive behaviours—caffeine consumption, smoking and drinking might be a sign of a certain kind of personality, according to the authors of the new study, led by Dr. Miguel A. Hernan of the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston. "It has been hypothesized that people who are destined to develop Parkinson's disease have a characteristic personality—moralistic, law-abiding, conscientious, risk averse, that leads them to avoid novelty seeking behaviours or that

they have an underlying metabolism (genetic or as a result of a toxic insult early in life) that makes these behaviours particularly unrewarding to them," the researchers explain. If this hypothesis is correct, then drinking, smoking and caffeine consumption should all appear to reduce the risk of developing Parkinson's, Dr. Alberto Ascherio, a study co-author also at Harvard, comments "Our result does not support that," Ascherio said in an interview. "Indirectly," he added, "it supports the idea that caffeine and something in cigarette smoke is protective." Currently, there are ongoing studies to look at the effects of caffeine in people who already have Parkinson's, Ascherio noted.

The researchers looked at data from two large, long-running U.S. studies the Nurses' Health and the Health Professionals' Follow-up Studies. After examining information from nearly 89,000 women and 47,000 men, the researchers found "little association between total alcohol consumption and Parkinson's disease incidence," according to the report. When they broke the data down into different types of alcohol, people who drank moderate amounts of beer showed a 30% lower risk of Parkinson's. But, the authors write, "because this lower risk was not found among wine or liquor drinkers, it is possible that some components of beer, other than (alcohol), may reduce the risk of Parkinson's disease."

SOURCE: *Annals of Neurology* 2003;54. Alcohol consumption and the incidence of Parkinson's disease Miguel A. Hernán, MD, DrPH¹ et al. Email: Miguel A. Hernán (miguel_hernan@post.harvard.edu)

Spanish wine laws embodies promotion of wine as part of the Mediterranean diet

The wine law passed by the Spanish government in June encourages the active promotion of wine as part of a healthy diet. Under the Ley del Vino - the biggest shake-up in wine laws since Franco - the Government will provide funds for local and national information campaigns, which should promote wine as an integral part of a Mediterranean diet. The law makes it clear that wine will be promoted as distinct from any other alcoholic beverage, and should include recommendations for responsible consumption. Growers and producers are encouraged to use environmental and sustainable farming methods. Funds are available for research and development projects at a local and national level.

The law has taken eight years to agree and sweeps away the pre-democracy laws of 1970 allowing more flexibility for producers. There are two new levels of DO: at the top end, above DOCa (Denominacion de Origen Calificada) is *Vinos de Pagos*. Then below DO is *Vinos de Calidad con Indicación Geográfica*, or VCIG, the equivalent of the Italian IGT or French VDQS. Consejos Reguladores will still make the rules, but a new, autonomous body will be created to police their application. The Federación Española del Vino has welcomed the new law. 'A new phase opens for a struggling sector which will permit it to compete with rivals operating in very deregulated environments. It is an important advance on the law of 1970.'

A drink a day improves overall heart health

People who drink one drink a day — wine, beer or spirits — show significantly better elasticity of their body's arteries, an important measure of cardiovascular health, results of a new study suggest. "We thought only red wine helps, but we found if people drink one beer or one unit of hard liquor a day, they also have improved arterial elasticity, better than nondrinkers," said Dr. Reuven Zimlichman of Wolfson Medical Center and Tel Aviv University in Israel. The research was presented via the American Society of Hypertension.

When arteries lose elasticity, they fail to relax as the heart pumps blood. This causes a rise in the systolic blood pressure, something Zimlichman calls a "terrible predictor" of future strokes, cardiovascular disease and heart attacks. The researchers also found that moderate drinkers had pulse rates that were significantly lower than those of nondrinkers. "There's been lots of study of pulse rates and the risk of disease," Zimlichman said. He noted that higher pulse rates are associated with an increased risk of disease and death.

In comparing wine drinkers with drinkers who favour other alcoholic beverages, the researchers observed that beer and spirits drinkers had slightly higher blood pressure than wine drinkers. But all drinkers had blood pressure within normal ranges. The researchers studied 243 healthy people between the ages of 15 and 80 who volunteered to fill out questionnaires and be tested at clinics in seven European countries. They excluded people who drank more than one drink a day and adjusted their findings for age because arterial elasticity commonly gets worse with age.

When asked if this study means non drinkers should start drinking, Zimlichman pointed out that heavy drinking itself can cause high blood pressure. "Whenever you recommend drinking, you have to consider the possibility that somebody will like it too much and over-drink and cause damage to his health," he said. "But if someone has a high risk of cardiovascular disease, I recommend to my patients that they drink one glass of red wine a day." Although his study showed similar benefits for beer and hard liquor as for wine.

Diet and exercise are effective in controlling high blood pressure

New research suggests that an overhaul of dietary and fitness habits to help prevent or control high blood pressure is feasible with proper coaching, contrary to the theory that too many changes would be overwhelming and ineffective for most people. The best results in the study were achieved when weight loss, salt restriction and exercise were paired with the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet, which is rich in fruits, vegetables and low fat dairy products.

The results of the study, conducted at Duke University Medical Center, Johns Hopkins, Pennington Biomedical Research Center, and the Center for Health Research, were published in the April 23, 2003, issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The study, called PREMIER, is funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

Current national recommendations for lowering blood pressure include weight loss, reduced sodium intake, increased physical activity, limited alcohol consumption and DASH diet. The DASH diet increases fruit, vegetable and low-fat dairy consumption, while limiting fats, red meat, sweets and beverages containing sugar. No previous study has tested the ability of people to adopt DASH on their own or its effectiveness in the 'real' world. And no previous study has tested all the other recommendations for lowering blood pressure, either with or without DASH, as an "all-in-one" intervention.

The PREMIER trial enrolled 810 generally healthy people with above-optimal blood pressure, including those with stage one hypertension (systolic BP 140-159 mmHg and/or diastolic BP 90-95 mmHg). None of the

participants took medications for hypertension. Those in the "Advice Only" group each met with a registered dietitian at the beginning of the trial to discuss recommendations for weight control, reduced sodium intake, physical activity and the DASH diet for lowering blood pressure plus printed educational materials.

Participants in both the "Established" and "Established Plus DASH" intervention groups set goals to lose 15 pounds within six months, increase physical activity, lower sodium intake and limit alcohol to one or two drinks per day. The Established Plus DASH group also set goals to increase fruit, vegetable and low-fat dairy intake and reduce saturated fat and total fat. The Established group was given no instructions on the DASH diet. During the initial six months of the trial, both groups met frequently to reinforce behaviour modification.

During the first six months of the trial, all participants in both the Established and Established Plus DASH groups significantly lowered their blood pressures in comparison to the Advice Only group. The Established Plus DASH group had the lowest prevalence of hypertension — cutting group members' risk of developing hypertension by 53 percent compared to the Advice Only group. "At six months, we had 19 participants in the Advice Only group who had to begin anti-hypertensive medication to control their blood pressures, compared to only two in the Established Group and five in the Established Plus DASH group," said Svetkey. "And both behaviour modification groups had a significant number of the participants reach their optimum blood pressure." All groups had an overall reduction

in weight. In the Established Plus DASH group, 34.3 percent lost 15 pounds or more, while in the Established group, 28.6 percent lost 15 pounds or more. The Advice Only group had only 6.2 percent lose 15 pounds or more. When participants took a treadmill exercise test, the tests showed fitness increased significantly in both the Established and Established Plus DASH groups.

Those on the DASH diet also benefited from other potential benefits: prevention of osteoporosis from the high calcium content, prevention of some cancers from the high fruit and vegetable content, and the prevention of cardiovascular disease from the low fat content."

Although the results for the Advice Only group were not as striking as the other two, this group did better in losing weight and decreasing sodium intake than expected. Svetkey said this could be because motivated people usually sign on to participate in clinical trials, and may produce better results than could be expected in the average population.

The long-term goal of the study, said Svetkey is to follow all the participants for an additional 12 months (18 months total) to determine whether the participants can stick with the diet and exercise, and monitor blood pressure control. The next phase in this series of research will focus on weight loss — specifically on how to help people lose weight and keep the weight off long-term. This new study, which is also funded by the National Institutes of Health, began enrolling participants in May 2003. The NHLBI press release is available at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/new/press/03-04-22.htm

Coffee and alcohol for stroke victims.

In a study on rats, a coffee and alcohol combination known as caffeinol given within 3 hours of an artery supplying blood to the brain being blocked was shown to reduce damage by up to 80%. It delivers the potency of 2 cups of strong coffee and an alcoholic drink, although neither caffeine nor alcohol were protective on their own. Treating and looking after the 140,000 stroke victims a year costs the NHS in Britain an estimated £2.3 billion. The experimental drug has been shown to be safe in a pilot study of patients suffering from ischaemic stroke where a clot blocks blood going into the brain and the

findings were reported in the *Stroke Journal* of the American Heart Association.

In the study on humans, led by Professor James Grotta, a team at the University of Texas gave the treatment to 16 females and 17 male stroke victims with an average age of 71. The aim of this study was to see if they could safely achieve the same blood levels of caffeinol that were achieved in the animal studies. Professor Grotta said, "We discovered that we could use even lower doses than we used in the animal studies and achieve the blood levels that were

neuro-protective in animals". Caffeinol can be safely administered to patients also receiving traditional 'clot-busting' drugs used to treat strokes. Professor Grotta said a "randomised placebo-controlled trial" was needed to determine the extent of caffeinol's protective effect in humans. He is planning a study combining caffeinol with thermo-cooling in stroke patients. Other studies have suggested that cooling the brain might limit stroke damage.

Source: www.stroke.ahajournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/01.STR.000068170.80517.B

Serve-wise and Alcohol Focus Scotland

Serve Wise (formerly known as SIPS) was developed with funding and guidance from the Scottish Office and enjoys continued support from the Scottish Executive to deal specifically with underage drinking, drinking and driving, criminal incidents and deaths/accidents related to alcohol in Scotland. ServeWise is managed by Alcohol Focus Scotland, a charity, operating on a non-profit basis. The importance of adequate training for all staff is increasingly being recognised by licensed trade, licensing boards and the police. Many licensing boards are now beginning to insist on training as a prerequisite for the granting or renewal of a licence.

ServeWise aims to set a National Minimum standard for all those involved in the sale of alcohol. In order to achieve this ServeWise offers short courses (approx. 1 day or 2 half days) each covering licensing law, alcohol and people skills. This is on two levels - ServeWise Plus for managers, licensees and experienced staff (covering the law in more depth and includes issues relating to management) and ServeWise for general staff. Both the courses are available in On and Off-Licence versions. At present there are just over 40 Centres throughout Scotland that can deliver ServeWise courses, located at colleges of further education, or training organizations or other types of organisations (including solicitors). There are two pilot centres in the South. The University of Cardiff in conjunction with the police-based TASC project (Targeting alcohol-Related street Crime) have held several courses and in Manchester, there is a multi-agency team including the licensed trade, the police and Alcohol and drug services Manchester, which has just begun to run courses.

Assisting in the setting up of the centres is the ServeWise Central Office. All trainers undertake a 2-day Trainer's Course and receive the ServeWise Trainer's Manual (containing course material, instructions on delivery and a specially designed video). All trainers' are subject to on going verification and continuous professional development requirements.

ServeWise believes that the training must be relevant, user-friendly, as well as assessable and affordable and is confident that there will be a reduction in the number of accidents and crimes resulting from the misuse of alcohol on licensed premises and consequently a lessening

in the amount, particularly in the terms of police and accident and emergency time. A number of licensed trade organizations support ServeWise such as the Scottish Licensed Trade Association, Diageo UK, the British Entertainment and Dance Association, the Leisure safety and Security Association.

Advice and assistance is also offered by ServeWise through its Advisory and Working Groups which include representatives from the Scottish Executive, the police, solicitors, licensing boards, the licensed trade, as well as those from training/further education perspective. These groups also assist ServeWise in organising other types of training and events, including annual events for licensing board members.

'Taster' ServeWise courses for the licensing board members can be provided where licensing boards wish to encourage training amongst licensees and staff. It is recommended that a 'Fit and Proper Person' policy is set up including training requirements. Several Boards have gone on to develop policies after attending a ServeWise taster event.

Both ServeWise and Alcohol Focus Scotland are still very much organisations in growth. From last year ServeWise has almost doubled its training numbers and Alcohol Focus Scotland is undergoing considerable expansion with several newly created posts - including a Gender Issues Network Officer (who for the next 3 years will focus on women alcohol issues), a User Support officer (to assist those experiencing alcohol problems and to set up net works) and a NetWork support officer who will assist with communications and development of the network of affiliated organisations, primarily the 30 Local Councils on Alcohol throughout Scotland which provide counselling and related services.

ServeWise, Central Office 166 Buchanan Street, Glasgow.G1 2LW. TEL: 0141 572 6703. Newsletters are produced by ServeWise and information can also be found on the Internet servewise@alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk

Drink-wise from Sweden

In October the Swedish Spirit & Wine Suppliers (SSWS) will launch an initiative called Drinkwise. The aim is to get the general public to consider their alcohol behaviour.

From the beginning Drinkwise will consist of a website, among other with an interactive part in which the visitor, by answering questions and claims, will be told what kind of alcohol consumer he or she is and the character of this type of consumer. SSWS concludes that Drinkwise is one example of initiatives following the publishing of a book, financed by the Public Health Institute, written by Sam Larsson at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm and Johan Lilja at the Academy of Turku in Finland. They conclude that it is better to teach young people how to drink than to tell them not to drink at all - it is better to discuss with them how to behave with alcohol.

The authors also say that prevention programmes so far have been too "propagandistic". The non drinking message has been repeated endlessly and has not been effective. The alcohol policy target should be to get young people to use weak alcoholic drinks and to drink in moderation. Maybe it is not realistic to believe young people will abstain but they ought to get a more conscious view on alcohol and drugs, the authors say. The book has been financed by the Public Health Institute.

Diageo to target binge drinking culture

The drinks giant, Diageo, is planning to launch a campaign aimed at reducing the problem of binge-drinking in the UK.

Diageo has asked its principal advertising agencies, J. Walter Thompson, Abbott Mead Vickers BBDO, Bartle Bogle Hegarty, Mother and Miles Calcraft Briginshaw Duffy, to pitch for the campaign.

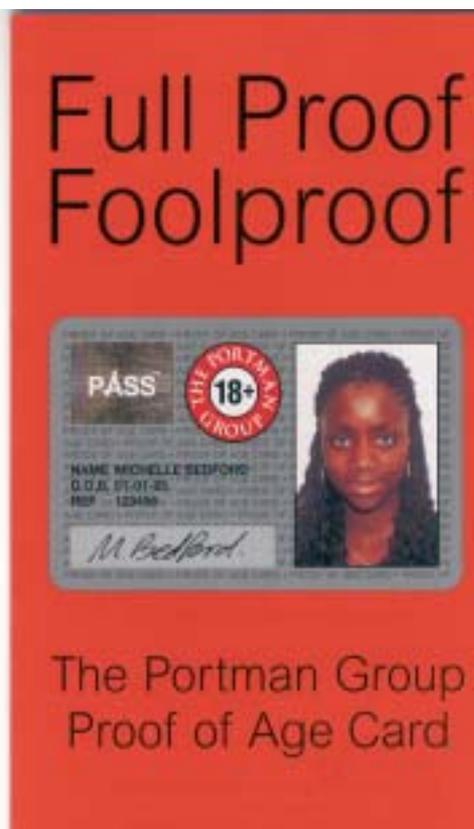
In the light of the increase in binge-drinking, drunkenness and alcohol-related violence, political support for further curbs on alcohol advertising has been growing. The industry body which speaks on alcohol policy, The Portman Group, has called for companies to introduce campaigns promoting responsible consumption. The UK government has called for consultation with a wide range of groups, including alcohol companies, on how violence in and outside pubs might be reduced.

Proof of age standards scheme (PASS).

The long established and well supported Proof of Age Card set up by the Portman Group has been accepted into the British Retail Consortium's new Proof of Age Standards Scheme (PASS). As from June 2003 the new card, complete with hologram will be in circulation.

PASS is an umbrella accreditation system, audited by the Trading Standards Institute and any card that is presented and bears the PASS logo has met the PASS standards and contains accurate and reliable information. This will help retailers make an informed decision on whether to allow a purchase. The Portman Group has relaunched the card bearing the PASS hologram and Portman Group 18+ logo. The Underage

Drinking and the illegal Purchase of Alcohol Report commissioned by the Nicholson Committee shows that 84% of 15 year olds placed drinking of alcohol as a common place activity. Of the young persons questioned 49% currently purchased alcohol illegally, 33% from licensed grocers, 24% from off-licences and another 24% from pubs or bars.



Wine may protect against adenocarcinoma of the lung

The subject of numerous prospective and case control studies has been the possible existence of an independent effect of alcohol use in the aetiology of lung cancer. As alcohol correlates strongly with smoking, possible residual confounding has been a particular concern. Results of several prospective studies were not adjusted for smoking therefore hampering their interpretation. This study by De Stefani E, Correa P and Deneo-Pellegrini H et al, was undertaken to examine in detail the relationship between alcohol use and the risk of adenocarcinoma of the lung

Between July 1998 and July 2000, all incidents of lung adenocarcinoma that were admitted to the 4 main hospitals in Montevideo, Uruguay were considered eligible for examining the roles of diet, drinking and smoking in the aetiology of this malignancy. Subjects for the study were 160 cases with newly diagnosed adenocarcinoma of the lung with 520 hospitalised controls with a condition unrelated to drinking or smoking. Information about socio-demographic variables, occupational history, smoking history, drinking history, height and weight 5 years before the interview, menstrual and reproductive history

(women) and a food frequency form including 64 food items were obtained by use of a questionnaire during interview.

Total alcohol use was not associated with risk of adenocarcinoma of the lung (OR 1.2, 95% CI 0.6-2.1). Beer consumption did not correlate with adenocarcinoma risk (OR 0.6, 95% CI 0.3-1.6). In contrast wine consumption showed a marginal protective effect (OR 0.4, 95% 0.2-1.1) while the use of spirits (predominantly cana derived from sugar cane and grappa derived from grapes) was associated with a 40% increase in risk of lung adenocarcinoma.

The results of the study suggest that wine consumption has a protective effect against the development of adenocarcinoma of the lung, while spirits are a moderate risk factor for this cell type of the lung cancer

Source: De Stefani E, Correa P, Deneo-Pellegrini H et al. Alcohol intake and risk of adenocarcinoma of the lung: a case-control study Uruguay. *Lung Cancer* 38 (2002) 9-14.

Conference on social responsibility

Industry Social Responsibility

The Amsterdam Group (TAG) are organising a conference on Social Responsibility on the 17th September at the Renaissance Hotel in Brussels. The aim of the conference is to present concrete actions undertaken by Social Aspects Organisations (SAOs) and stakeholders involved in the distribution of the alcoholic beverages to reduce the negative impact of alcohol consumption on individuals and society through:

Education and information campaigns to promote sensible drinking, in particular towards young people

Responsible advertising and marketing of alcoholic beverages by industry and retailers to comply with the Recommendation on Alcohol Drinking by Children and Adolescents adopted by the Commission in June 2001. For Details, please contact Carole Brigaudeau The Amsterdam Group Rue Wiertz 50/28 B - 1050 Bruxelles T: + 32.2.401.61.66 F: + 32.2.401.68.68 M: + 32. (0) 486.117.199 cbrigaudeau@amsterdamgroup.org

International Conference on Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety, T 2004

In August 2004, many of the world's experts on drugs and alcohol will gather in Glasgow for the 17th International Conference on Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety.

The Conference will explore developments in new policies and technologies to counteract alcohol and drugs problems in the context of road traffic safety. In particular, it will explore the following key areas of Driver Characteristics, Pharmacology and Toxicology, Epidemiology, Rehabilitation, Prevention, Driving and Performance, Police Enforcement and Work Related Transport Issues.

To submit an abstract or register interest in the conference please visit the conference website at www.ICADTS2004.com Tel: +44 (0) 141 434 1500 Fax: + (00 141 434 1519 Email: icadts2004@meetingmakers.co.uk

WINE AND THE GASTROINTESTINAL TRACT

By Harvey E. Finkel, M.D.



Wine goes in at the mouth, much to our delight, then trickles through other parts of the body. Let us go then, you and I, to explore the tortuousness of the gastro-intestinal tract, taking along divers potables to observe their effects.

Most GI adversities associated with drinking beverages containing alcohol come with excess, and virtually all are caused by alcohol in particular. In some cases, the effect of wine is different from that of other drinks—watch for them. The ineffable morning-after distress following indiscretion is poorly understood and is transient, but unpleasant consequences of heavy drinking may be lasting and as severe as cancer.

The all-too-common chief complaint of the oesophagus (gullet) is heartburn, caused by welling up of acid material from the stomach. Two major determinants of such acid reflux are the quantity of acid secreted by the stomach and the propulsion of the stomach acid the wrong way, upward into the oesophagus instead of downward into the intestine. Wine may stimulate heartburn: it stimulates acid production by the stomach. Alcohol does not. Here is a rare example of an unfavourable effect of wine's special attributes, presumably polyphenolic antioxidants. Alcohol, however, especially in heavy dose, may relax the lower oesophageal valve (sphincter) that is supposed to seal off the oesophagus, and disorder motility, thereby

promoting reflux.

Cirrhosis of the liver of any cause, including abuse of alcohol, is often complicated by formation of oesophageal varices, dilation of veins of the lower oesophagus, a distinct risk of life-threatening haemorrhage. The stomach is both a key actor and a target in the life of ingested alcohol. Alcohol dehydrogenase, the enzyme that first metabolizes alcohol, so neutralizing it, is secreted by the gastric mucosa, the lining of the stomach. When ample alcohol slows the emptying of the stomach, alcohol dehydrogenase has more time to attack the alcohol.

Women's stomachs contain about 60 percent as much alcohol dehydrogenase as do men's, likely the chief reason for the long-observed lesser tolerance of women for alcohol and the recommendation that their safe and healthy portion should be about half of men's. So, when a couple share a bottle of wine at dinner, he should get two-thirds.

Binge drinking of high-proof beverages may lead to acute gastritis, inflammation of the stomach, sometimes accompanied by haemorrhage. Wine and beer are innocent, and may be protective.

The intestines, large and small, are not just inert pipes conveying food and the products of digestion to their fate. Their linings actively secrete digestive enzymes and absorb the nutrients made available by digestion. Their muscular walls churn and propel the contents to enhance the chemical reactions of digestion. The muscular motility of the intestine may be reduced in alcoholics, thereby unpredictably altering function and allowing toxic bacterial overgrowth. An odd converse has been observed recently in overweight mice, whose obesity slows intestinal motion. The bacteria that grow to excess as a result produce alcohol, and these mice develop liver abnormalities similar to those of obese humans and to alcoholics. The lesson may be that obesity and alcohol are collaborators in causing liver disease—take heed.

Surprisingly, light-drinking laboratory rats have exhibited enhanced liver regeneration after injury compared to rats who abstained or who drank more. Heavy doses of alcohol may impair intestinal absorption of nutrients, including thiamin, vitamin B12, amino acids (the building

blocks of proteins), perhaps calcium and zinc, leading to complex malnutrition..

Iron absorption may increase with drinking, not necessarily harmless, for excessive iron may injure the liver. Excessive drinking often leads to diarrhoea.

That wine, especially, and other alcohol-containing beverages help prevent gastrointestinal infections has been known for a very long time. Claret, drunk in British army messes in India, was held to be "a sovereign preventative against the prevalent cholera", just one of a number of similar observations here and there over the years. More recently and more scientifically, wine has been demonstrated to be an effective inhibitor of a trio of fearsome bacteria, *Escherichia coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Shigella*, causes of "traveller's diarrhoea" and worse, typhoid and related diseases, and bacillary dysentery, respectively. Researchers suspect that the operative benefactor is one, or more, of wine's polyphenols. Wine and spirits, but not beer, consumed with raw oysters contaminated with hepatitis A virus, which enters via the gastro-intestinal tract, were associated with a reduced risk of infection. The bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* (*H.pylori*) looms, much to the astonishment of the medical profession, a malign superstar of the first magnitude. It resides in the stomachs of those infected. Who could have imagined that this organism causes much of chronic gastritis, a large majority of peptic ulcers, and a substantial proportion of cancers of the stomach? *H. pylori* is now being implicated as a promoter of our most deadly disease, atherosclerosis, cause of heart attacks, strokes, and other catastrophes. Drinking, especially of wine, appears to help eliminate *H. pylori*. In a direct study, less than one-third as many drinkers as abstainers were infected.

H. pylori infection is also associated with reduced activity of alcohol dehydrogenase in the stomach. After eradication of the infection, alcohol dehydrogenase normalizes within two months. Alcohol is the only component of wine that has been clearly shown to increase the risk of some cancers, and then only when abused.

Chronic heavy drinking, particularly accompanied by abuse of tobacco, is associated, in the gastro-intestinal tract, with increased cancer risk in the mouth, throat, oesophagus, and perhaps the upper stomach.

Alcohol colon and rectal cancer

Inconclusive reports have raised the question of a slight increase in risk of cancer of the pancreas. The data relating beer and spirits to a possible slight increase of risk of colorectal tumours are conflicting and confusing.

Might moderate drinking protect against cancer? Early indications suggest the answer might be "yes". A number of studies has demonstrated that wine, in particular, possesses several properties that would tend to prevent or inhibit cancer, no doubt through the actions of its antioxidant compounds. Epidemiologic research has revealed substantial reduction of risk of cancers of the oesophagus and upper stomach and colon and rectum in wine drinkers as compared to non-drinkers.

In essence, past experience and current research indicate that abuse of alcohol risks damaging the gastro-intestinal tract at several points, but moderate wine consumption risks only a little heartburn, while possibly leading to major health benefits, not to mention gustatory pleasures.

Whether wine is a poison, a medicine or a nourishment is a matter of dosage. — Paracelsus

Harvey E Finkel M.D is Clinical Professor of Medicine at Boston University Medical Centre and is a member of AIM's Social, Scientific and Medical Council.

a study by Dr. Morten Gronbaek of the National Institute of Public Health in Copenhagen, has found that heavy drinkers (especially non-wine drinkers) significantly increase their risk of contracting rectal cancer. The findings are based on a population study of over 29,000 Danish men and women aged between 23 and 95. Cancers that originate in the colon and rectum are the fourth most commonly diagnosed cancers in the U.S., and represent the second-leading cause of death from cancer. Approximately one-third of the cases of colorectal cancer are actually cancers of the rectum, Gronbaek said. Their weekly intake of beer, wine, and spirits was assessed, as were other factors likely to influence bowel cancer risk, such as how much they smoked, weighed, and took regular exercise. Men were more likely than women to be heavy drinkers, and heavy drinkers were more likely to be smokers and to weigh more than light drinkers.

During a monitoring period of almost 15 years, 411 cases of colon cancer and 202 cases of rectal cancer were reported among those studied. Alcohol seemed to have little influence over the risk of colon cancer, but there was a clear association between rectal cancer risk and the amount of alcohol consumed. Those drinking more than 41 units of alcohol a week had twice the risk of developing the disease as

non-drinkers. But the type of alcohol consumed had a significant bearing on rectal cancer risk. Those who drank 14 or more units of beer or spirits a week were over 3.5 times as likely to develop rectal cancer as non-drinkers. Yet those who drank the same total amount of alcohol, but who included around a third or more of wine in their intake were less than twice as likely to develop the disease. The authors point out that wine drinkers tended to be better educated and to take more exercise than beer or spirit drinkers, so there may be other healthier lifestyle factors at play. There are no obvious reasons why alcohol should apparently be more damaging to the rectum than the colon, but the reasons why wine seems to exert its protective effect most likely lie in resveratrol, which is found in both grapes and wine.

Previous research indicates that this chemical damps down the cellular processes involved in the promotion and growth of cancerous cells. The lack of a relationship between alcohol drinking and colon cancer risk is also somewhat of a mystery, according to Gronbaek.

"The tissue is rather similar in the two parts of the organ — colon and rectum — and one might expect the same mechanism in developing the disease," Gronbaek said. However, he added that previous studies have also found that alcohol has an effect on the rectum but not the colon. SOURCE: *Gut* 2003;52:861-867

30th Alcoholic Drinks 2003 - Conference



The World Advertising Research Centre will be holding the eighth annual **Alcoholic Drinks conference** in central London on Tuesday 30th September. The conference will be chaired by Nick Kendall, Group Strategy Director, Bartle Bogle Hegarty.

This year's programme will concentrate in particular on the urgency and importance of social responsibility issues for the alcoholic drinks industry. With the UK Government in the middle of developing a national alcohol harm-reduction strategy conducted by the Prime Minister's own Strategy Unit and the Department

of Health, self-regulation may give way to legal controls on the advertising of alcoholic drinks. Speakers include: Rita Clifton, Chairman, **Interbrand** Hamish Pringle, Director General, **IPA**, Wendy Darlington, Brand Marketing Director, **Diageo Plc** Jaspar Shelbourne, Global Creative Director, **JWT** Alan Mitchell, Journalist Mike Spurling, Director, **The Informer** *A Special Panel on Social Responsibility* features: Andrew Brown, **The Advertising Association** Hugh Burkitt, **The Marketing Society** Leanne Riley, Scientist, **World Health Organisation**, Jean Coussins, **The Portman Group**, Helmut Wagner, **The Amsterdam Group** Chris Searle, Executive Director, **Bacardi Martini**

For details, contact: Sarah Miller, World Advertising Research Center Farm Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon. RG9 1EJ. Tel: 0044 (0) 1491 418 646 Fax: 0044 (0) 1491 418 600 Mail: sarah_miller@warc.com Web: www.warc.com/conferences

Brewers of Europe 3rd Beer and health symposium

The Brewers of Europe are holding a conference on the benefits of moderate beer consumption on the 15th October at the Residence Palace, Brussels.

The event is chaired by professor Oliver James of the University of Newcastle and includes presentations on alcohol and weight, moderate drinking and well being and nutritional aspects.

For more information, please visit www.brewersofeurope.org or email info@brewersofeurope.org

Moderate Alcohol Intake as Part of a Healthy Diet and Lifestyle:

- A Look at Alcohol Inclusive Nutrition Concepts from Around the World by Elisabeth Holmgren

1. Introduction

As part of cultural traditions and well balanced lifestyles wine, beer and spirits consumption has been a common staple in diets around the world. In acknowledgement of such practices, groups of nutrition experts have included the moderate consumption of alcohol as an optional component of various dietary guidelines and food guides such as: *the Mediterranean, Asian, Latin American and Vegetarian Pyramids*. Here we outline the key scientifically based nutrition messages in these pyramids.

The outlined alcohol-inclusive dietary pyramids are part of an effort by Oldways Preservation & Exchange Trust, a non- profit education group that is dedicated to preserving traditional eating patterns with the goal to improve consumer knowledge and diets around the world. Oldways has prepared these concepts with prominent nutrition, medical, biomedical and communication experts from leading institutions such as the WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Harvard School of Public Health.

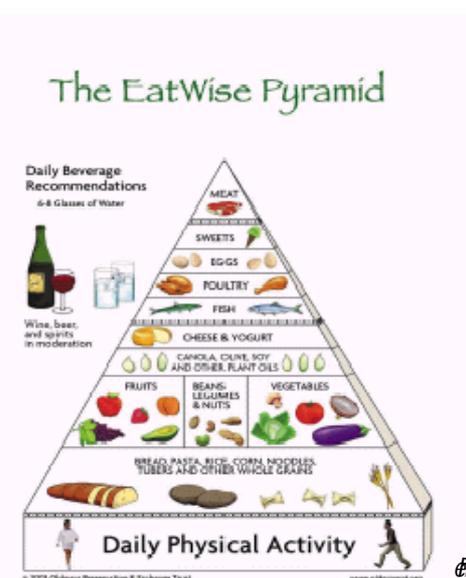
Cardiovascular disease and cancer are leading causes of death in developed nations around the world, predominantly being associated with diets high in animal fats. With that emerging scientific consensus, the Oldways pyramids all emphasize fruits, vegetables, cereals and pulses with little meat (animal fats) consumption. These nutrition concepts also include wine, beer and spirits, which have shown to contribute to lower heart disease rates and improve longevity.

Accumulating scientific evidence suggests that moderate consumption of wine, beer and spirits does not pose a health risk to the vast majority of consumers who choose to drink in moderation. AIM's recommendations also emphasise that adults should enjoy alcohol beverages in a sensible manner, preferably around mealtimes or other responsible social settings. Moderation is the key to a healthy diet and lifestyle, and this is reflected in several traditional nutrition concepts.

Consumers should follow moderation guidelines such as those in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans which define moderation as up to two drinks (12g) a day for men and up to one drink a day for women; further, consumers should avoid alcohol during pregnancy or whenever it would put the individual or others at risk.

To learn more about the US Dietary Guidelines message on alcohol, please visit www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines and for other authoritative links on alcohol please also visit the AIM links page on the gateway to sensible drinking and health site via www.aim-digest.com

Alcohol-Inclusive Nutrition



The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid

www.oldwayspt.org/pyramids/med/p_med.html



The Mediterranean Diet Concept

Long known for its healthy lifestyles and the longevity of its people, the Mediterranean region is also home of some of the most palatable and healthy foods on earth. Traditionally, wine has been included as an integral part of its meals, and cross-cultural studies have reported significantly lower risk of heart disease in Mediterranean regions where alcohol is a daily staple of a healthy diet and lifestyle. As the preferred beverage in this region, wine is specified as an option on "The Traditional Healthy Mediterranean Diet Pyramid," developed by Oldways in cooperation with scientists from the WHO in Europe and from the Harvard School of Public Health. This traditional diet is based on grains, including rice, polenta, bulgur and pasta, as well as legumes and vegetables. It also includes fruits, cheeses, yogurt and nuts along with the optional choice of alcohol in moderation. Olive oil is given its own category as a major source of mono unsaturated fat, reflecting its important prominence in the region's healthy cuisine. Daily physical activity, a factor contributing to health in the Mediterranean region and elsewhere, is also included on this and all Oldways pyramids.

The 'Eatwise' concept

The latest "Eat Wise" Pyramid, including "wine, beer and spirits in moderation" as part of a daily beverage recommendation was released at January's 2003 Mediterranean Diet Conference sponsored by Harvard School of Public Health and Oldways Preservation & Exchange Trust. This new pyramid is modelled on the original Mediterranean Diet Pyramid, which initially only recommended wine in moderation, reflecting the cultural preference of the Mediterranean region. "This Eat Wise Pyramid is a visual guide to healthy living the Eat Wise way," the accompanying text states. "It shows the partnership of a balanced diet, plenty of water, regular physical activity, and alcohol in moderation that wise eaters know strengthen all their bodies' functions." An expert conference discussion emphasized the potential benefits for all three beverages. Eat Wise Meal Ideas, shopping tips and recipes are outlined in a special eating guide that can be ordered via the Oldways website.

The Asian Diet Pyramid

www.oldwayspt.org/pyramids/asian/p_asian.html



The Latin American Diet Pyramid

www.oldwayspt.org/pyramidslatin/p_latam.html



The Vegetarian Diet Pyramid

www.oldwayspt.org/pyramids/veg/p_veg.html



The Asian Diet Concept

As Asian cuisine continues to become popular in diverse regions of the world, characteristics of Asian diets will continue to gain importance. In Japan and China, studies have found rates for heart disease and many types of cancer to be lower than those in the United States and the rest of the world. The centuries-old traditional Asian diet of rice, noodles, vegetables and fish is believed to be a significant contributor to the documented lower rates for chronic disease in these populations. The “Traditional healthy Asian Diet Pyramid,” developed in cooperation with scientists at Cornell University and the Harvard School of Public Health, incorporates these dietary patterns into the pyramid format. Sake, wine, beer, and other beverages with alcohol in moderation, as well as tea, are included as part of the pyramid because studies have shown that their consumption may play a role in reducing heart disease risk and overall mortality.

The Latin American Concept

The Traditional Healthy Latin American Diet Pyramid,” released in 1996, is based on the traditional foods of Latin America. Unlike the Americanized versions that tend to be high in salt and fat, this pyramid presents many healthy eating options. It emphasizes daily consumption of beans, grains, tubers and nuts along with fruits and vegetables—staples in most Latin American and Caribbean regions. Daily physical activity is integrated into the pyramid structure in recognition of the scientific consensus on the importance of exercise in maintaining good health. Alcohol in moderation with meals is included as an option, and, as with other cultural pyramids, meats, sweets and eggs are at the very top of the pyramid, in the “occasionally” category to advocate a healthy and balanced lifestyle that can reduce the risk for several common diseases.

The Vegetarian Diet Concept

The unique “Vegetarian Diet Pyramid,” released by Oldways at the end of 1997, serves as a model for healthy eating with meals built around vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes. The pyramid also emphasizes daily physical activity, water consumption and the option of “wine, beer and other alcohol” in moderation. The importance of this dietary concept, according to Oldways, is that it reflects the growing number of vegetarians and

acknowledges the nutritional and health benefits of this type of diet. For example, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans have acknowledged such a diet as able to meet Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) for nutrients. While some vegetarians are prohibited from consuming meat and alcohol for religious reasons, all alcohol beverages are included as a choice because of the potential risk reduction for heart disease and its cultural role as an accompaniment to vegetarian eating.

The Scientific Evidence

The nutritional and medical significance of the traditional Oldways Dietary Pyramids was featured in “Medical News Perspectives” of the Journal of the American Medical Association in 2000. The author highlighted the importance of well-balanced and nutritious diets as a potential disease prevention measure that could be increasingly conveyed by physicians and healthcare providers to their patients. More recently, Greek and US scientists investigated the health effects of adherence to a Mediterranean Diet reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2003: “Greater adherence to the traditional Mediterranean diet is associated with a significant reduction in total mortality.” Coinciding with these acknowledgements, there is now a developing scientific consensus that, for many individuals, moderate wine, beer and spirits consumption is associated

with a reduced risk of coronary heart disease and increased life expectancy which lead to the above featured alcohol-inclusive nutrition concepts.

In 1997, Sir Richard Doll, Emeritus Professor of Medicine at Oxford, outlined in the *British Medical Journal* "massive" evidence for the potential beneficial effect of alcohol in a review of the clinical data on alcohol and mortality. He concluded that "the consumption of small and moderate amounts of alcohol" leads to a one-third-risk reduction for vascular disease. He also acknowledged a reduction in total mortality in middle-aged and elderly men and women when they consumed wine, beer or spirits. More recently, world-renowned expert Dr. Arthur Klatsky from the US outlined the overwhelming scientific evidence in *Scientific American*. Dr. Klatsky has published many research studies on alcohol and health in leading scientific journals from the large-scale Kaiser Permanente cohort and in the recent article he wrote with respect to the most appropriate advice to the public, "On one hand, mild to moderate drinking seems better for heart health than abstinence for select people. On the other hand, heavy drinking is clearly dangerous." Merely recommending abstinence is inappropriate health advice to people such as established light drinkers at high risk of CHD and at low risk of alcohol-related problems—which describes a large proportion of the population." Dr Klatsky along with other experts from around the world has advocated that health professionals make case-by-case evaluations based on individual and family histories. They also emphasize that the public should be entrusted with all the information on use versus misuse of alcohol so that they can make informed decisions themselves.

Authoritative findings from cohorts internationally, lead research experts to feature the option of moderation in each traditional Oldways Dietary Pyramid. Many peer-reviewed studies from Europe, Asia, Australia and the US have revealed potential benefits for moderately drinking adults in multi-ethnic populations. These studies find that moderate drinkers, especially consumers of 1-2 drinks (12g) daily, may lower their risk of heart disease significantly. Studies reporting certain health advantages for moderate drinkers include the Lyon Heart Study, the Copenhagen City Heart Study, the Australian Dubbo Study and the European Seven Country Study.

The Oldways experts, working with the Harvard School of Public Health, specifically considered findings from the ongoing Physicians' Health Study and the Nurses' Health Study. Analyzing data from 84,000 women in the Nurses' Health Study the effect of a combination of diet and lifestyle factors were assessed on the risk of CHD, Dr Meir Stampfer et al concluded, "In this population of middle-aged women, those who did not smoke cigarettes, were not overweight, maintained a healthful diet described above, exercised moderately or vigorously for half an hour a day, and consumed alcohol moderately had an incidence of coronary events that was more than 80% lower than that in the rest of the population." At the same time, based on a prospective study of more than 89,000 men as part of the Physicians' Health Study, Harvard researcher Dr Michael Gaziano et al concluded, "In summary, this study reveals the complex effect of alcohol consumption on various chronic diseases as reflected in the overall U-shaped relationship between light-to-moderate alcohol consumption and total mortality in men." The earlier results from the US government's funded National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) were also considered, which found that the risk for CHD is reduced for both men and women who drink moderately. Published in 1997 in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* it stated, "This analysis confirmed previous research showing that abstainers are at a greater risk for CHD than are most non abstainers and that a significant protective effect may be demonstrated with small amounts of alcohol." Along those lines, research published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* from American Cancer Society experts concluded, "In this middle-aged and elderly population, moderate alcohol consumption slightly reduced overall mortality."

At the same time, there are continuing concerns about alcohol consumption and breast cancer and women are recommended not to drink when pregnant, in line with governmental and public health positions in the US. Authoritative statements from public health groups such as the American Heart Association, the National Stroke Association and the American Dietetic Association acknowledge the scientific evidence pointing to potential benefits of moderation with respect to coronary heart disease and emphasize, "If you choose to drink, do so in moderation." A balanced summary position is

reflected in the 1999 JAMA Patient Page on "Benefits and dangers of alcohol", which defines 'Moderate drinking as 1 or 2 drinks (12g) a day for men and 1 drink a day for women and those older than 65.' These messages are embodied in governmental positions in the US, UK, Australia and Canada.

The Oldways alcohol messages as reflected in the pyramids are, however, especially notable in that they emphasize consumption with or around mealtime, as research has shown that these and related cultural norms facilitate responsible drinking habits, may slow alcohol absorption and may counter potential harmful effects of fatty foods. For example, Dr. David Hanson, author of Preventing Alcohol Abuse: Alcohol, Culture, and Control, explains, "The cross-cultural evidence indicates that drinking abuse will be low in any group in which drinking customs, values and sanctions are clear.... and characterized by prescriptions for moderate drinking and proscriptions against immoderate drinking." Furthermore, several biochemical studies indicate that in addition to slowing down the absorption process, which keeps blood alcohol levels lower, moderate consumption during or around mealtime may have favourable effects on lipid profiles and atherogenesis. One 1998 study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, suggested "ethanol may reduce cardiovascular risk by modulating vascular muscle growth during the postprandial period." Research continues, but it appears clear that healthy dietary patterns are inversely related with low rates of chronic diseases. This has been specifically confirmed in the ongoing Seven Country Study which reported in 1999 that animal-food groups were directly correlated with CHD mortality while vegetable-food groups, as well as fish and alcohol were inversely correlated.

In summary, in line with the developing scientific consensus, public health and governmental positions, the Oldways pyramids stress moderation and underscore the importance of an overall healthy meal and lifestyle. Consumption is not recommended for non-drinkers or those who may have any health contraindications and consumers are always advised to consult with their healthcare providers.

For selected references and authoritative statements on moderate drinking and health, please visit the Gateway to Sensible Drinking and Health via www.aim-digest.com

ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN ALCOHOL AFFAIRS

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www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

ALCOHOL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH COUNCIL

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