

It's Official: The Benefits of Moderate Alcohol Consumption are Confirmed

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) has released an important position paper in the US on drinking, which will serve as the National Institute of Health's formal position on the health risks and potential benefits of moderate alcohol consumption.

The paper was commissioned in support of the 2005 update of the US Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services Dietary Guidelines, due to be completed in August this year.

The report makes several important statements: Namely that: There is no raised risk of heart attack or ischemic stroke from moderate drinking and 'provides protective effects in terms of coronary heart disease among older individuals and those otherwise at risk for heart disease'.

Moderate consumption 'does appear to be associated with a reduced risk of diabetes and metabolic syndrome (which often co-exist with or develop from obesity)'.

Low to moderate drinking during pregnancy 'does not appear to be associated with an increased risk of fetal physical malformations, but may have behavioural or neuro-cognitive consequences.... therefore there is no threshold below which consumption may be safe during pregnancy'.

The consumption of one drink (14g) a day 'appears to be associated with a 10% increase in the risk of breast cancer', but 'women may want to weigh this lifetime increase in risk against a potential reduction of heart disease risk over the same time span, especially as heart disease is the number one killer of women over the age of 45'.

The report emphasises the importance of drinking patterns, where by the message of little and often should be

promoted and the importance of accounting for one's own size, weight, sex, genetic susceptibility, life style factors, metabolic rate and age in balancing the pros and cons of drinking. 'Protective and detrimental levels of alcohol consumption cannot be generalised across the population but instead should be determined by an individual in consultation with her or his health care provider'.

In a separate statement, the NIAAA has redefined its definitions of 'binge' or 'risky' drinking as the number of drinks that takes your BAC above .08, or the drink-drive limit. They calculate this would mean five or more drinks in a two hour period for an average male, or four or more drinks for an average female.

On a less positive note the NIAAA released an Alcohol Education Curricula for teachers which appears less balanced. It categorises any consumption - even at mealtimes with parents, of those under 21 as 'abuse'. It does acknowledge alcohol's role in social, medical cultural and religious settings over the centuries, but states that alcohol being good for your health is a 'misconception' and that the positive and negative effects of consumption should be counter balanced.

See pages 10 and 12 for a full review of the findings.

Contents

(Click on an item/ page no. to be taken directly to your choice of article)

Social And Policy News	3
Medical News	5
Articles	
NIAAA Releases Position Paper on Moderate Alcohol Consumption	10
Patterns of Drinking and Liver Disease	12
Reviews	
Just-Drinks.com - Drinks Advertising in The EU today	13
ICAP - What Drives Underage Driving	13
Allied Domecq - Social Report	13
Educ Alcool - Be Prepared to Talk to Your Children	14
NZ Beer, Wine and Spirits Council - Drinking to your Health	14
Profile: Ellen Mack MD	14

AIM International Conference on 27th October 2004

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at John Lewis Partnership Board room Suite, Victoria Street, London, SW1
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Presenters will include a head teacher, police, youth leaders, National Health Manager, students, industry members and associations.

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Sherry.Webster@Aim-Digest.com

AIM Digest
 PO Box 2282
 BATH, BA1 2QY, UK
Tel: (44) (0)1225 471444
Fax: (44) (0)1225 427444
e-mail: info@Aim-Digest.com
Web sites: www.aim-digest.com
www.drinkingandyou.com

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Sherry.Webster@Aim-Digest.com

Peter Duff – Executive Chairman,
 tel: (44) (0)1225 471444
 email: Peter.Duff@Aim-Digest.com

Helena Conibear – Editorial Director,
 tel: (44) (0)1300 341601
 email: Helena.Conibear@Aim-Digest.com

Elisabeth Holmgren – Director of US Operations
 tel: 001 925 9343226
 email: Elisabeth.Holmgren@Aim-Digest.com

Sherry Webster – Communications Manager
 tel: (44) (0)1225 471444
 email: Sherry.Webster@Aim-Digest.com

Alison Rees - Publishing Assistant
 email: AIM-Alison@btconnect.com

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Published by: AIM Digest,
 PO Box 2282, BATH, BA1 2QY, UK

Russia

Recent amendments to an advertising bill could have consequences for Russia's brewers. The economic policy committee of the Russian parliament has proposed amendments, which would ban beer advertising on primetime television. The committee's chairman, Valery Draganov, was quoted by the news agency, saying: **"We have to look after the health of the nation, so we have to restrict advertising."**

The amendments to the bill have been in draft form for around two years, initially with support from brewers who did not want specific legislation on beer advertising. Deputies now look likely, however, to adopt amendments that will ban beer advertising on television and radio between 5pm and 10pm, as well as prohibiting the portrayal of people or animals in the advertisements.

Sweden

The top wine buyer at Systembolaget, Barbro Strom, has said that the Swedish state-owned alcohol retailing monopoly can no longer compete against growing cross-border shopping by Swedes to countries with lower alcohol tax rates. However, she warned that lower alcohol taxes and, therefore, lower pricing could lead to consumption getting out of control.

Kent Harstedt, who is in charge of investigating cross border shopping by Swedes, said that tax on alcoholic drinks in Sweden was too high and had to be reduced. He found that the consumption of foreign alcohol in Sweden over the last 12 months has been double those of the alcohol sales of Systembolaget. Harstedt has not yet made any proposal as to how much the Swedish alcohol taxes must be reduced.

On June 2nd the government passed an Alcohol Bill to Parliament. The Bill contains the new Advertising Act and proposals to allocate more money for information to youngsters and money to the four alcohol free zones (adolescence, pregnancy, road traffic and at workplaces). The Bill also proposes alcohollocks in all new cars from 2012 and stronger punishment for drunk driving.

Ireland

A new Irish advertising code for alcohol has been released which seeks to ensure alcohol is marketed and sold in a socially responsible way.

The Code of Practice from the Mature Enjoyment of Alcohol in Society (MEAS) will aim to ensure that drinks companies do not claim that their products create sexual prowess, bravado or sporting success or target under-18s. Adverts must not use actors or images of people who look under 25 years of age. Neither can they feature sporting heroes or real and fictitious characters **'associated with youth culture'**. Adverts must also not encourage binge-drinking, drunkenness or drink-driving.

The code also targets the on-trade. Publicans are forbidden to serve multiple drinks in a single glass and promotions for alcoholic drinks cannot be used at events where more than a quarter of the expected audience is under 18.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria's parliament has imposed restrictions on the advertising of alcohol in the country. A ban has been imposed on liquor advertising, and electronic media is only permitted to broadcast commercials after 10 pm.

The new Health Act states that indirect advertising of alcohol cannot be directed at children under the age of 18, nor can it be connected with sports and sexual achievements.

The maximum fine for violating the new act is BGL5,000 (US\$3,086) with repeat breaches attracting fines up to BGL10,000.

EU

The Nordic Countries decided, at a meeting in Iceland, to lobby the EU to abolish the zero-rate for wine tax and to increase tax for RTDs. Deputy Finance Minister Gunnar Lund said **'it is important to get a unified Nordic Strategy and to act together to be successful within the EU'**.

The Commission recently presented its report on the alcohol taxation directives functioning. It didn't include any proposal to increase the minimum rate or to introduce a positive rate for wine tax. The main reason could be that such a proposal requires unanimity in the Council, and this is not expected.

Teenagers Explore the Dangers of Alcohol Abuse in Explore-At-Bristol

A new interactive exhibit in Explore-At-Bristol, which aims to provide innovative and peer led alcohol education to 11-16 year-olds, is proving a popular attraction with teenage visitors. Funded by Bristol based spirits and wine company, Allied Domecq, *'Measure up on alcohol...know your limits'* is a multi-media touch screen exhibit with three stimulating games themed around an eventful house party.

Researchers visited a number of local youth groups, engaging with teenagers to learn more about alcohol education and to find out how much they understood about alcohol and its effects. Discussions confirmed that teenagers didn't always know the strength of drinks and lacked knowledge about the legal and

long-term effects surrounding alcohol consumption. Leading experts in alcohol research were consulted to come up with the concept of the exhibit's innovative way of communicating alcohol awareness to 11-16 year olds.

Footage of real life party situations acted out by local performers forms the basis of the three part interactive game. Against the clock, participants have to calculate how many units each of the six characters is consuming and then guess the outcomes as they encounter some typical alcohol induced scenarios. These include binge drinking, illness, misjudging situations and violent behaviour. By choosing different outcomes, contestants bring up pop up

screens that highlight more facts and figures about each alcohol related issue. There's even a quick fire quiz to test knowledge on everything from the liver to the law.

Ben Eavis, Allied Domecq's Group Social Policy Manager says, *'We are an acknowledged leader of responsible business practice and our funding of the alcohol education exhibit in At-Bristol is another indication of our ongoing commitment to social responsibility and to working in partnerships with organisations in our local community.'*

To find out more about Explore-At-Bristol and its exhibits, visit the web site www.at-bristol.org.uk

EC Alcohol Abuse Strategy Takes Shape

EU Health Ministers have expressed support for the European Commission's strategy for tackling alcohol abuse. The Ministers, meeting in Luxembourg warned, however, that the strategy must take into account the problem of binge-drinking among younger drinkers. Recent data from the World Health Organisation suggests that up to 55,000 young people, aged between 15 and 29, die in Europe each year from alcohol over-consumption. A discussion paper will be presented in the next few months, which will form the basis of the Commission's alcohol abuse strategy. The strategy will stress respect for alcohol and promote drinking in moderation. Drink-driving and alcohol advertising will also be covered by the strategy, which should be presented within the next six months.

Broadcast Advertising in the UK to be Policed by the Advertising Industry

Broadcast advertising in the UK will be policed by the advertising industry under plans approved by communications regulator Ofcom.

The Advertising Standards Authority, the self-regulatory body that oversees press and poster ads, will have its remit expanded to include TV and radio commercials. Ofcom will implement the system in November, assuming it gains parliamentary approval.

Under the scheme, three agencies will be set up under the ASA: the Advertising Standards Authority (Broadcast) will deal with public complaints; the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice will monitor general advertising standards; and the Broadcast Advertising Standards Board of Finance will fund the watchdogs via a levy on TV and radio commercials.

'The UK's advertising industry through the ASA has successfully regulated its own actions in the non-broadcast environment for over 40 years,' declared Ofcom chief executive Stephen Carter. *'Extending that responsibility to create a one-stop shop for all advertising offers real benefits to consumers and advertisers alike.'*

The scheme was welcomed by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, whose director general Hamish Pringle called it far-sighted.

Some consumer groups voiced dismay at the decision. *'Ofcom is proposing to hand control of the advertising standards codes to the industry, in the midst of a major public debate about the rules governing advertising, especially of foods to children,'* declared Allan Williams, a senior policy adviser at the Consumers' Association.

French Reinstate Daily Ritual of 'A Glass of Wine with a Meal' ?

Of the four working parties set up by the French Prime Minister to assess wine's place in society, one was devoted solely to issues surrounding 'wine and health'.

Chaired by MP Paul-Henri Cugenc, the working party is expected to put forward a proposal for wine to be presented as an integral part of a balanced diet. The phrase 'a glass of wine with a meal' has been coined by members of the party with

the aim of reinstating wine as a daily ritual and responding to indictments by anti-alcohol campaigners by emphasising its inseparable link with food and the need to drink in moderation.

The forty or so trade representatives, MPs and members of the medical and scientific community who took part in the appraisal procedure of wine and health.

Figures on the number of deaths reportedly caused by alcohol abuse have increased with some organisations now claiming that as many as 45,000 people die in France because of excess drinking.

It remains to be seen whether the group's proposals will be accepted by the anti-alcohol organisations and whether the government will follow recommendations issued by the working parties.

US Governor Teams with Beer Wholesalers

Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell recently teamed with the National Beer Wholesalers Association (NBWA) to produce a radio public service announcement aimed at fighting drunk driving and illegal underage purchase and consumption of alcohol.

The thirty-second radio spot is part of an ongoing alcohol awareness campaign by NBWA featuring sports celebrities, elected officials and entertainment figures.

'I'm pleased to say that in the past two decades, drunk driving fatalities in Pennsylvania have declined 38 percent, but we can do more,' said Governor Rendell. 'We all must do our part to ensure that only those of legal drinking age consume alcohol - and that no one ever drives drunk.'

'The citizens of Pennsylvania are fortunate to have a leader such as Governor Rendell dedicated to reducing drunk driving deaths and keeping alcohol out of the hands of our nation's youth,' said NBWA President David Rehr. 'Beer wholesalers are pleased to partner with responsible state and federal leaders to promote this important message.'

'Pennsylvania beer wholesalers sponsor numerous programs educating the public about responsible consumption, such as designated driver programs and materials to help parents talk to their children about the dangers of illegal underage drinking,' said Jay Goldstein, president of the Pennsylvania Beer Wholesalers Association.

EU Commission Debate On Minimum Excise Duty Rates

The European commission has presented a report on the operation of the EU-wide system of minimum rates of exercise duty on alcohol and alcoholic beverages with a view to launching a broad debate on the subject. The report considers the effect of the present system on the proper functioning of the Internal Market, the competition between the different types of alcoholic drinks due to differences on levels of excise duty, the current real value of the minimum rates that were set in 1992 and the wider objectives of the EU treaty. The commission concludes that more convergence of the rates of excise duty

in the different Member States is needed so as to reduce fraud. However, given the widely differing views in the Member States about the appropriate levels of the minimum rates, and given that any change would require unanimous agreement, the Commission is not making a proposal at this time. Instead it wishes to launch a broad debate in the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee. On the basis of the outcome of this debate the Commission will decide whether or not to submit proposals on all or some of the issues raised within the report.

"Don't be a Drunken Monkey"

The Portman Group are currently running a new three month advertising campaign across the Midlands region "Don't be a Drunken Monkey", features TV and cinema adverts aimed at making young adults stop and think about how much they are drinking.

The adverts show a group of friends on a night out with Jo, a chimpanzee. Like a drunk, Jo's antics will be funny at first, but things quickly turn nasty, and the advert ends with a clear hard-hitting message that drunken behaviour is a lot of aggravation, and can leave you vulnerable and at risk.

Jean Coussins, The Portman Group Chief Executive said 'It's no fun going out for a night with a drunken mate who shouts and swears, gets into fights, spills peoples drinks and gropes

everything that moves...By putting this surprising and hard hitting campaign onto peoples TV screens we hope to challenge young adults to think about their attitudes and behaviour when they go out for a drink'

It is hoped that the campaign will be rolled out nationally later in the year.



Changes to Advertising Regulations in the Pipeline in France

After intensive lobbying by the wine industry, the French Senate adopted an amendment to advertising regulations for alcoholic drinks which provides for statements specifically related to wine such as reference to vineyards, controlled appellations and awards, to be included in adverts. The amendment is designed to fill a legal void as the "Loi Evin", made no specific provision for collective

advertising run on behalf of the various French vineyards by regional trade boards. The void was made apparent earlier this year when the national anti-alcohol league ANPAA took both the Burgundy and Bordeaux trade boards to court over generic advertising campaigns, and won. The amendment now has to be submitted to the Lower House of Parliament where it could well

be modified by MPs or the government which is apparently against reference to the product itself such as taste or smell. Meanwhile, lobbying continues and several national anti-alcohol bodies have issued a petition to 'save the Loi Evin'. If the amendment is upheld it might bring short term relief for the French wine industry, which is currently battling against falling sales in France and declining exports.

Alcohol Helpful after Stenting

Moderate drinking may help patients recover from coronary stenting to open blocked arteries, according to new research. Stenting involves using a very small tube to remove blockages from arteries. The consumption of alcohol appears to promote healing by inhibiting inflammation.

Researchers analyzed data on alcohol beverage consumption, an inflammatory protein (CRP), and mortality in 483 subjects who underwent coronary stenting. By the end of four years, 23% of the patients were readmitted for chest pain, had a heart attack, or died from heart-related causes. Moderate alcohol consumption reduced the risk of each of these undesirable outcomes so long as the patient's CRP level was above a certain level.

It appears that moderate alcoholic beverage consumption may promote heart health by reducing inflammation, in addition to reducing clotting, reducing 'bad' cholesterol, increasing 'good' cholesterol, and other means identified by medical researchers.

Source: Zairis, M.N., et al. C Reactive protein, moderate alcohol consumption, and long term prognosis after successful coronary stenting: four year results from the GENERATION study. *Heart*, 2004, 90, 419-424.

Alcohol and Brain Structure

Scientists from Harvard University studied alcohol consumption and prevalence of sub-clinical abnormalities detected by magnetic resonance imaging of the brain among 3376 older adults enrolled in the Cardiovascular Health Study. They found that alcohol consumption was positively associated with measures of brain atrophy and inversely associated with sub-clinical infarcts in a dose-dependent manner. They conclude, "Alcohol consumption and white matter lesions had a U-shaped relationship, with the lowest prevalence among those who consumed 1-6 drinks per week. Further research is needed to determine how these associations interact to influence overall brain function."

Reference: Mukamal KJ, Alcohol Consumption and Abnormalities of Brain Structure, *American Journal of Geriatric Cardiology*, Vol 13, No 1, 2004.

Alcohol, Fat and Increased Risk of Breast Cancer

A new Swedish study has found that postmenopausal women who consume high amounts of alcohol are at a higher risk from breast cancer.

According to the study, women who drank more than 3 units of wine per day were twice as likely to get the disease compared to women with little or no alcohol intake. Moderate drinkers, meanwhile, were found to be at a 12 percent lower risk of breast cancer. High dietary fat, long suspected to be a culprit in breast cancer, also was associated with the disease. As amounts of fat in women's diets increased, so did their risk of breast cancer. Those who consumed the highest amounts saw their risk of getting breast cancer rise by 34 percent.

The authors observed the dietary and drinking habits of 11,726 postmenopausal women in the city of

Malmö, using interviews and self-recorded diet histories. Physical examinations were performed at the beginning of the study and the women were followed for an average of 7.6 years. A total of 342 breast cancer cases were documented during the study period.

Providing some dietary advice, the authors explain that women should drink moderately, if they choose to drink, as the research debate on alcohol and breast cancer is still evolving. The same journal featured other studies looking at potential breast cancer risk factors such as a women's height.

Source: Mattisson I et al, High fat and alcohol intakes are risk factors of postmenopausal breast cancer: A prospective study from the Malmo Diet and Cancer Cohort. *Int J Cancer* 2004;110/ May 17

on line issue at www.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/jhome/29331

Compounds in Beer and Wine Slows Breast Cancer Cell Growth

A new study has determined that certain compounds found in wine, beer and tea have contributed to a significant decrease in breast cancer cell proliferation. It is believed that alcohol affects the levels of female hormones, especially for postmenopausal women whose bodies make less estrogen and progesterone than before they entered menopause. As a consequence, women's breast cells may be exposed to higher levels of estrogen if alcohol is consumed. This may in turn trigger the cells, which are estrogen sensitive in such women, to become cancerous.

Phenolic phytochemicals are widely distributed in the plant kingdom. In various experiments, it has been shown that selected polyphenols, mainly flavonoids, confer protective effects on the cardiovascular system and have anticancer, antiviral and antiallergic properties. Flavonoids are low molecular weight compounds composed of a three-ring structure with various substitutions, which appear to be responsible for the antioxidant and antiproliferative properties.

Three researchers from the Universidade do Porto, Portugal set out to examine whether phenolic compounds could have properties that would be effective in fighting breast cancer. They investigated the effect of three phenolic compounds — epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), xanthohumol (XN) and resveratrol (RES) — substances present in significant concentrations in tea, beer and red wine, respectively, on the growth of a human breast cancer cell line, MCF-7.

The researchers concluded that all three polyphenolic compounds when present in the nutritive medium of a breast cancer cell line (MCF-7), were all able to reduce cell proliferation. These biochemical results add support and meaning to epidemiological studies that relate consumption of certain beverages with a lesser incidence and prevalence of cancer.

Source: Phenolic Compounds in the Control of Breast Cancer Cell Growth S. Pinheiro-Silva, I. Azevedo, and C. Calhau, Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal

Alcohol Consumption and Cardiovascular Disease Mortality in Hypertensive Men

Heavy alcohol drinking is associated with a dose-dependent increase in blood pressure, but data on the relation between alcohol consumption and mortality in hypertensive patients are sparse. The objective of this study was to assess the relation between light to moderate alcohol consumption and total mortality from cardiovascular disease (CVD) among men with hypertension. From the Physicians' Health Study enrollment cohort of 88,882 men who provided self-reported information on alcohol intake, the investigators identified a group of 14,125 men with a history of current or past treatment for hypertension who were free of myocardial infarction, stroke, cancer, or liver disease at baseline.

The investigators conclude that these results suggest that light to moderate alcohol consumption is associated with a reduction in risk of total and CVD mortality in hypertensive men.

This thorough study is of importance because physicians generally advise their hypertensive patients to avoid alcohol. As has been seen in the general population, the hypertensive men in this study who reported that they consumed alcohol had markedly lower risks of cardiovascular and total mortality. Among the hypertensive subjects, both those whose blood pressure was under good control and those who still had pressures of 140/90 or higher showed the same protection.

This study adds further support to the recommendations resulting from only a few others that have focused on hypertensive patients: hypertensives should be advised to decrease their drinking if it is excessive, but they do not need to abstain.

Source: Alcohol consumption and cardiovascular disease mortality in hypertensive men. Malinski MK, Sesso HD, Lopez-Jimenez F, Buring JE, Gaziano JM Arch Intern Med 2004;164:623-628

Alcohol Consumption and Diabetes Mellitus

Following a review of thirty-two studies that met a set of standard criteria, it was recently found that compared with no alcohol use, moderate consumption (one to 3 drinks/d) is associated with a 33% to 56% lower incidence of diabetes and a 34% to 55% lower incidence of diabetes-related coronary heart disease. However, heavy consumption (>3 drinks/d) may be associated with up to a 43% increased incidence of diabetes.

The investigators found that moderate alcohol consumption does not acutely impair glycemic control in persons with diabetes. Specifically, the authors write, 'Moderate alcohol consumption is associated with a decreased incidence of diabetes mellitus and a decreased incidence of heart disease in persons with diabetes'.

Further studies are needed to assess the long-term effects of alcohol consumption on glycemic control and on cardiac complications in persons with diabetes."

Source: Howard A et al., Effect of Alcohol Consumption on Diabetes Mellitus – A Systematic Review, Annals of Internal Medicine, Vol 140, No 3, 2004, pp211-219

Moderately Drinking Women Found to be in Overall Better Health

This study found that women who drank alcohol moderately were in better health overall than those who didn't drink. The study was done by the Oregon Health and Science University, in collaboration with the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research in Portland. The researchers surveyed 3,069 men and 2,600 women members of Kaiser Permanente Northwest. The investigators write, "For both genders, light to moderate consumption and more frequent drinking were associated with better health and functioning; relationships were stronger among women than men."

The research found that women who drank moderately had better health and physical functioning than non-drinkers. On the other hand, women who drank heavily were in worse health. Because

women have more body fat than men, blood alcohol concentration for a given amount of consumption is greater in women than that of men.

The greater blood alcohol concentration in women appears to increase the benefits of light and moderate drinking, but also raises the danger of heavy drinking. The investigators cautioned that they did not find that better health is a result of moderate drinking. In fact, a Kaiser Permanente report several years ago found moderate drinkers also tended to lead healthier and more balanced lifestyles. Moderate drinking was defined as one to two drinks per occasion, two or three times a week, or 15 to 29 drinks spread out throughout the month.

Source: Green, C et al, Gender Differences in the Relationships between Multiple Measures of Alcohol Consumption and Physical and Mental Health. , Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research. 28(5):754-764, May 2004

2nd International Conference on Alcohol Harm Reduction

'Alcohol and Harm Reduction, new challenges in a changing world' is the title for the 2nd International Conference on Alcohol Harm Reduction to be held in Warsaw 25-28th August

Speakers will include policy makers, practitioners and researchers. The conference will put emphasis on: the development of public alcohol policies in countries in transition; a shift of attention from reducing alcohol consumption per se to reducing alcohol related harm; and putting alcohol higher on the public agenda.

For more details visit www.alcoholconference.nl

Protein In Grape Skins Can Kill Cancer Cells

Scientists at the University of Virginia Health System have discovered that resveratrol helps to starve cancer cells by inhibiting the action of a key protein that feeds them. The protein, called nuclear factor kappa B (NF-kB), is found in the nucleus of all cells and activates genes responsible for cell survival. **'We used physiologically-relevant doses of resveratrol and found dramatic effects on human cancer cells,'** said Marty Mayo, assistant professor of biochemistry and molecular genetics at U.Va.

Mayo said that the resveratrol in one glass of wine three or four times a week is the right amount to block the protein from feeding cancer cells. Drinking much more than that, however, could stop this affect and, in fact, lead to a greater risk of cancer.

The findings, discovered by Fan Yeung, a postdoctoral fellow at U.Va., are published in the May 20 online edition of the Journal of the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO).

Resveratrol is an antioxidant found in a number of plants, including grape skins, raspberries, mulberries and peanuts. Its job in nature is to fight fungus during the rainy season, and it is especially prevalent in grapes used in making red wine.

For a number of years, scientists have known that resveratrol acts as an anti-cancer agent, but its role has not been well understood. Mayo and his team

demonstrated that cancer cells treated with resveratrol died because they became sensitive to a compound called Tumor Necrosis Factor alpha (TNF α). The U.Va. Health System researchers found that resveratrol initiated a reaction in the NF-kB molecule that caused the cancer cells essentially to self-destruct in a process called apoptosis.

The use of NF-kB inhibitors like resveratrol also has important implications for increasing the effectiveness of cancer therapy. **'Researchers are always looking for ways to improve cancer therapy,'** Mayo said. **'Current studies are using compounds similar to TNF α in conjunction with resveratrol to kill cancer cells.'** Clinical trials using this approach in patients are showing encouraging results and this research may explain why this combined therapy is effective.

Previous studies have also shown that resveratrol can help control atherosclerosis, heart disease, arthritis, and autoimmune disorders. Mayo believes the inhibition of NF-kB may be responsible in those disorders, as well, since NF-kB can control inflammatory responses.

Mayo's research on resveratrol was funded by grants from the National Cancer Institute and the Paul Mellon Prostate Cancer Institute.

Source: Yeung F et al. Modulation of NF-B-dependent transcription and cell survival by the SIRT1 deacetylase. EMBO J 2004;10.1038/sj.emboj.7600244.

Link between Sleepless Toddlers & Teenage drinking?

A long-term study has found a significant connection between sleep problems in children's toddler years and the chance that they'll use alcohol, cigarettes and drugs early in their teen years. Young teens whose pre-school sleep habits were poor were more than twice as likely to use drugs, tobacco or alcohol.

The surprising finding, made by a University of Michigan Health System team as part of a family health study that followed 257 boys and their parents for 10 years, held true even after other issues such as depression, aggression, attention problems and parental alcoholism were taken into account. Long-term data on girls are not yet available.

Based on their result, the researchers suggest that early sleep problems may be useful as a 'marker' for predicting later risk of early adolescent substance use — and that there may be a common biological factor underlying both traits. The relationship between sleep problems and the use and abuse of alcohol in adults is well known, but this is the first study to look at the issue in children.

They also emphasize that parents should take the finding only as one more reason to focus on healthy sleep habits for their children — not as a reason to worry.

Source: April issue of Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research by a team from the U-M Addiction Research Center (UMARC), in the Department of Psychiatry, and a colleague from Michigan State University

Socio-Economic and Health Characteristics of Elderly Alcohol Beverage Consumers

This UK study determined the socio-economic and health characteristics associated with different levels of alcohol intake in older people. Specifically, the study investigated associations between reported alcohol intake and various socio-economic and health variables, first in univariate analyses and then controlling for other variables in logistic regression models. A total of 5% of men and 2.5% of women exceeded the Royal College of Physicians, Psychiatrists and

General Practitioners' recommended drinking limits of 21 and 14 units a week respectively; 17% of subjects had never had a drink. Women and the very elderly were less likely to be drinkers. Those that drank were more likely to be people who still had a fairly active and sociable lifestyle and with a better self-perceived health status, compared with non-drinkers. Moderate drinkers were also less likely to be severely cognitively, impaired compared with non-drinkers.

The investigators write in the conclusion, "Our results suggest that moderate alcohol consumption is associated with relative financial security and good health with the exception of higher levels of anxiety amongst drinkers."

Source: Hajat S et al, Patterns and Determinants of Alcohol Consumption in People aged 75 Years and Older: Results from the MRC Trial of Assessment and Management of Older People in the Community, Age and Ageing, 33, 2004

AIM was established in 1991 to communicate about sensible drinking and health. AIM has worldwide support from all sectors of the beverage alcohol industry.

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AIM

AIM – Alcohol in Moderation was founded in 1991 as an independent organisation whose role is to communicate ‘The Sensible Drinking Message’ and to act as a conduit for information from the industry, associations and relevant medical and scientific research, legislation, policy and campaigns.

AIM Mission Statement

- To promote the sensible and responsible consumption of alcohol,
- To encourage informed debate on alcohol issues,
- To communicate and publicise relevant medical and scientific research in a clear and concise format via AIM Digest and the AIM Research Highlights,
- To publish information via the ‘AIM Gateway to Sensible Drinking and Health’ website containing a unique archive of research on moderate drinking and health – comprehensively indexed and fully searchable,
- To publish information to the consumer on sensible drinking and health via the ‘Drinking and You’ website based on national government guidelines with sections for the UK, USA, Canada, Spain, France Sweden and Germany,
- To distribute AIM Digest without charge to the media, legislators and researchers involved in alcohol affairs,
- To direct enquiries from the media and others towards full and accurate sources of information.

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Institute

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Times and Author

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NIAAA Releases Position Paper on Moderate Alcohol Consumption

In support of the 2005 update of the U.S. Department of Agriculture/U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Dietary Guidelines, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism was asked to assess the strength of the evidence related to health risks and potential benefits of moderate alcohol consumption, with particular focus on the areas of cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, obesity, birth defects, breast-feeding, and aging.

The findings were reviewed by external researchers with extensive research backgrounds on the consequences and benefits of alcohol consumption. This report now serves as the National Institutes of Health's formal position paper on the health risks and potential benefits of moderate alcohol use.

“Our reviewers have found that the lowest total all-cause mortality occurs at the level of one to two drinks per day,” said T.K. Li, NIAAA director. “The state of current science does not advocate drinking; these findings simply point out what the research says about the health-related effects of moderate drinking. In short, except for those individuals at identifiable risk, consuming two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women is unlikely to cause problems.”

Some of the key findings are:

Moderate levels of alcohol consumption do not increase risk for heart failure/myocardial infarction or ischemic stroke and may, in fact, provide protective effects in terms of coronary heart disease (CHD) among older individuals and those otherwise at risk for heart disease. However, more research is needed on the lifetime accumulation of CHD benefits and/or risks.

The study finds that the effects of 20 to 30 years of moderate drinking begun at age 45 may not be comparable to the effects of 50 to 60 years of moderate drinking begun at age 22. For example, the medical consequences of chronic alcoholism - such as cirrhosis and cardiac myopathy - appear to be related to

lifetime consumption levels. Although these diseases are normally associated with excessive rather than moderate consumption, it remains unclear if the 25-year-old moderate drinker might lower his risk of heart disease by age 65, only to succumb to cirrhosis by that age instead.

The average alcohol consumption of one drink per day appears to be associated with a 10-percent increase in the risk of breast cancer in the overall population; the risk may be higher among women with a family history of breast cancer as well as those on hormone replacement therapy.

“The controversy surrounding the issue of alcohol and breast cancer takes two forms,” said Gunzerath. “First, there is the ‘absolute’ issue of whether alcohol increases the risk of breast cancer in women without a family history or other acknowledged risk factors for the disease”. There are many behavioural, biological, and environmental factors that may contribute to the risk calculation, such as smoking, weight, nutrition and exercise, as well as factors that determine ‘lifetime’ levels of endogenous estrogen, such as age at menstruation and at menopause, number of pregnancies, and age at first pregnancy. However, there have been few, if any, studies that have managed to separate out the effects of alcohol from other risk factors. One exception is the finding of an increased risk of breast cancer when alcohol is combined with postmenopausal use of estrogen replacement (ER) - an increase not found in moderate-drinking women who do not use ER.

The second issue relates to “offsetting” risks. For example, the risk of breast cancer by age 80 increases from approximately nine percent for non-drinkers to approximately 10 percent for those who regularly consume two drinks per day. When this increase is applied across 150 million American women, it means 1.5 million more may get the disease. But for any individual woman, the one-percent increase in risk is relatively small. **Women may want to weigh this lifetime increase in risk against a potential reduction of heart-disease risk over the**

same time span, especially as heart disease is the number one killer of women over age 45”, states Lorraine Gunzerath, NIAAA Branch Chief for Strategic Research Planning and corresponding author for the study.

The relationship between moderate alcohol consumption and weight gain, body mass index, and/or obesity remains unclear; however, moderate consumption does appear to be associated with a reduced risk of diabetes and metabolic syndrome (which often co-exist with or develop from obesity).

Some of the conflicting findings on the relationship between alcohol consumption and obesity may be due to studies that consider limited timeframes, such as a period of several weeks or months, rather than lifetime habits finds the report. In addition, studies have not necessarily used comparable definitions of ‘moderate’ drinking or considered the same confounding factors such as food intake volume or composition, exercise, or medication use.

Normally, when a person eats, insulin is released to process the food. Insulin helps sugar (or glucose) get out of the blood and into muscle cells that use it for energy. When an individual is “insulin resistant” or has poor insulin sensitivity, blood sugar levels become elevated, which can increase the risk for developing diabetes. “Our review has found that consuming moderate amounts of alcohol may help the body better utilize insulin,” said Gunzerath.

Low-to-moderate drinking during pregnancy does not appear to be associated with an increased risk of fetal physical malformations, but may have behavioral or neuro-cognitive consequences. There is some evidence for a dose-response association but, so far, there is no “threshold” below which consumption may be safe. Heavy drinking during pregnancy is clearly unsafe.

Prenatal alcohol exposure - even at the

highest levels - does not always result in FASD; however there is no 'known' safe level of consumption. Women who have consumed alcohol during pregnancy - for example, before realizing that they are pregnant - should discuss these issues with their health-care provider."

Given that alcohol will dissipate from breast milk in time, the safest course is to allow sufficient time between drinking and nursing so that the mother can fully metabolize the alcohol.

In addition, and contrary to folklore, alcohol does not aid lactation and may actually decrease it for several hours following consumption. "Furthermore, the presumption that the effects of maternal alcohol consumption passed through breast milk may relax the infant and thus promote sleep has not been demonstrated. In fact, short-term alterations that are consistent with alcohol's effects on adults have been found in infants' sleep-wake patterning. However, deficits in both consumption and sleep are short-lived, in that the infant later 'makes up the difference' or compensates, provided that the mother's alcohol consumption is not maintained."

Although elderly drinkers reach higher blood alcohol concentrations at lower levels of consumption than younger drinkers, there is no evidence that moderate alcohol consumption causes cognitive impairment as one ages.

"The inconclusive nature of the relationship between moderate alcohol use and Alzheimer's dementia is likely due in part to the role that genetics plays in Alzheimer's occurrence," said Gunzerath. "About 25 percent of Alzheimer cases are hereditary; they are caused by mutated genes and tend to cluster in families. Although the remaining 75 percent are classified as sporadic, with no other blood relatives known to be affected, genetics may nonetheless play some role. We do not yet know if alcohol use may increase susceptibility for some genetic combinations and offer a protective effect in others."

Given the complex nature of both Alzheimer's and macular degeneration (a reduced ability to see fine detail, and a leading cause of vision loss in older Americans), as well as the absence of further findings, Gunzerath suggested

that elderly individuals refrain from altering moderate levels of alcohol consumption in an attempt to affect risk. The review findings can be condensed into two key "take-away" messages.

Drinking patterns are at least as important as total consumption in terms of alcohol's harms and benefits. Low per-occasion consumption occurring regularly - for example, one or two drinks per day, four days a week - generally confers greater benefits and poses less harm than the same total amount consumed all at once. Secondly, the relationship between moderate alcohol consumption and disease outcome is influenced by numerous individual differences - age, sex, genetic susceptibility, lifestyle factors and metabolic rate for example. Protective and detrimental levels of alcohol consumption cannot be generalized across the population but instead should be determined by an individual in consultation with her or his health-care provider."

Source: Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research. 28(6):829-847, June 2004. Lorraine Gunzerath; Viviam Faden; Samir Zakhari; Kenneth Warren

Lifestyle Determinants of High-Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol

While genetic factors are major determinants of high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C), environmental factors also play a role. The latter include 3 modifiable lifestyle factors: alcohol consumption, physical activity, and smoking. This study compared the relative effects of alcohol, physical activity, and smoking on HDL-C levels, using data from 2,309 subjects (1,226 women and 1,083 men), aged 25 to 91 years, from randomly selected families participating in the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Family Heart Study.

The researchers found that alcohol consumption was associated with the largest increment in HDL-C (an increase of 9.0 for men and 13.1 mg/dL for women, from non-drinker to highest categories); physical activity with a more

modest increment (an increase of 3.0-3.3 mg/dL from lowest to highest categories); and cigarette smoking with a large decrement in women (a decrease of 9.9 mg/dL) and a modest one in men (a decrease of 2.6 mg/dL) between non smoker and ≥ 20 cigarettes per day categories. This study suggests that, among lifestyle behaviors, alcohol consumption is the more important correlate of HDL-cholesterol.

R. Curtis Ellison, co author of the study commented 'We were surprised to find such a small increment from physical activity, which is generally recommended by physicians when they find a low HDL-cholesterol. Even though the lowest quartile of our subjects had less than 10 minutes per day of any level of exercise (real "couch potatoes") and the

highest quartile reported at least 60 minutes per day of activity, the difference in HDL between these extreme quartiles was only about 3 mg/dl, whereas the difference between abstainers and moderate drinkers was 9 to 13 mg/dl. While drugs specifically designed to increase HDL are currently under development and should reach the market in the next couple of years (and will undoubtedly make billions for the pharmaceutical industry), none of the currently available medications has as much of an impact on HDL than a drink a day'

Source : Ellison RC, Zhang Y, Qureshi MM, Knox S, Arnett DK, Province MA. "The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Family Heart Study". Am Heart J 2004;147:529-535.

Patterns of Drinking and Liver Disease

This study by Stranges et al examined 2,943 Caucasians (1,575 females, 1,368 males) from two counties in New York state, between 1995 and May 2001.

All of the study participants were between the ages of 35 and 80 years, and were free from any known hepatic diseases. Computer-assisted in-person interviews gathered information about their alcohol intake, such as drinking frequency during the week, drinking with meals and snacks, drinking in the absence of food, and mixed. Blood samples from all study participants were measured for levels of GGT, AST, and ALT.

Liver injury can be determined by testing the blood for concentrations of certain enzymes, such as gamma-glutamyltransferase (GGT), aspartate amino-transferase (AST), and alanine amino-transferase (ALT). ALT, AST and GGT are the most widely used biochemical indicators of liver function.

Although these enzymes are not very specific, they are used routinely for assessing liver function in health screening, and in epidemiological research that focuses on the risk factors for liver disease, including alcohol consumption. Among them, GGT, despite its lack of specificity, seems to be the hepatic biomarker most strongly associated to alcohol intake. Other factors, such as obesity and body fat distribution, appear to be stronger determinants for aminotransferase levels, especially for ALT.

The most significant association was found with GGT: for both genders, average GGT levels were significantly higher in both current and former drinkers compared to lifetime abstainers.

‘Our findings also suggest that how and when drinkers consume alcohol may be as important to a healthy liver as the amount consumed,’ states Stranges. ‘Moreover, these findings reveal gender differences in the effects of drinking on the liver. In men, the amount and frequency of drinking seem to be more important than pattern, while in women, pattern appears to be more important than the amount consumed.’

Specifically, we found that the men who drank daily had the highest levels of GGT; while in women, GGT levels were highest in those who drank only on weekends. A gender difference was also found when examining food intake. Women who did not eat or snack when they drank had higher levels of GGT than women who drank primarily with a meal, even though the amount of alcohol was the same. In men, there was no significant difference in GGT levels between those who drank with food and those who did not. Finally, and not surprisingly, the amount of alcohol men and women could consume without causing potential liver damage, based on GGT levels, also differed. Results showed that the safe range for men was 14 to 27 drinks per week, or [roughly] three a day; for women, the safe range was 7 to 14 drinks per week, or no more than two a day.’

The apparent greater susceptibility to hepatic damage among women is most likely the result of differences in how men and women metabolize alcohol. The fact that women need to drink a lesser amount of alcohol than men, or for a shorter amount of time, to produce the same degree of damage is referred to as the “telescoping” phenomenon. Some of the reasons behind this phenomenon, include a decreased gastric oxidation of ethanol and lower gastric alcohol dehydrogenase activity in women, the interference of hormonal status (both endogenous and exogenous female hormones have been shown to result in some impairment of liver function in a significant number of women), methodological issues, such as a higher degree of under reporting of alcohol intake among women than men, and possibly other risk factors associated with specific drinking patterns.

“Our manuscript’s findings lend support to the growing scientific interest in the role of drinking patterns on many health and social outcomes. Our findings may also have important public-health implications for the kind of advice given to both the population at large and to women in particular. The suggestion is, if you drink, drink in moderation and with food, and spread the consumption over a long period of time, rather than a short period such as a weekend.”

Source: Stranges, S et al, Differential Effects of Alcohol Drinking Pattern on Liver Enzymes in Men and Women. *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*. 28(6): 2004.

NIAAA Advisory Committee Redefines ‘Binge’ and ‘Risky’ Drinking

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism’s (NIAAA) Advisory Committee has redefined the definitions of both “binge” and “risky” drinking, which were outlined in recently released meeting minutes. Specifically, they redefined binge drinking as pattern of drinking alcohol that elevates blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) to .08 or above. This would mean about 5 or more drinks for a typical male and 4 or more drinks for a typical female adult in a two-hour period. Formerly the definition did

not specify body weight, drink type or size or length of drinking occasion. Most noteworthy, by redefining binge drinking to correspond to BAC level, the report states that it takes far less alcohol for many people, including light weight women, to be categorized as “binge drinkers”. NIAAA further states: ‘For some individuals (e.g., older people; those taking other drugs or certain medications), the number of drinks needed to reach a binge-level BAC is lower than for the “typical adult.” People

with risk factors for the development of alcoholism have increased risk with any level of alcohol consumption, even that below “risky” level. Along those lines of more precise and stricter definitions’, NIAAA also explains, ‘Binge drinking is distinct from “risky” drinking (peak BAC between .05 and .08 grams percent) and “benders” (2 or more days of sustained drinking to intoxication)’.

For more information visit www.niaaa.nih.gov/about/min2-04.htm or www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/dga/

Drinks Advertising in the European Union Today

This comprehensive study by www.just-drinks.com of the legislative, regulative and voluntary bodies involved in advertising and its monitoring in every country in the EU is an invaluable resource. Each sector of the media is covered and all the contact information for each organisation furnished.

Guidelines and regulatory codes are reviewed and an overview is given of EU guidelines and legislative objectives.

Every member country of the EU has legislation in place which either directly or indirectly impinges on alcohol advertising. In terms of EU wide legislation there has been just one directive that included specific measures relating to alcohol advertising for TV only, which has been incorporated in to the national laws of 15 member states. 13 member states are currently updating alcohol policies and covers a wide spectrum of possible legislation including fiscal measures, youth and public order policies

and licensing, with advertising and its regulation high on the agenda. The report concludes that at present 'the drinks industry is charged with convincing those in favour of regulation that self regulation works..... the industry has to demonstrate that it can be part of the solution (in tackling alcohol misuse).... The importance of responsible and effective self regulation of advertising in reinforcing that message cannot be overstated'.

For a copy of the report visit www.just-drinks.com

What Drives Underage Drinking ? An International Analysis

This report from the International Center for Alcohol Policies contributes to the ongoing debate over appropriate and effective responses to the risks posed by early alcohol debut and misuse. It explores the basis of underage drinking from the epidemiological, biomedical, and cultural perspectives and reviews their implications for future research, education, and government policy. The report demonstrates the complexity of underage and youthful drinking and the many different factors

that need to be taken into account in designing appropriate responses. The report will be of interest to all those concerned with young people's drinking. Although it does not offer specific recommendations, it provides essential background material from perspectives that are seldom considered in relation to each other.

The report is broadly divided into two parts. The first part consists of three articles: Dr. Marie Choquet examines the

epidemiological data on underage drinking, Dr. Linda Patia Spear then reviews the biomedical aspects of early alcohol exposure, and Dr. Gonzalo Araoz concludes with his section on cultural considerations. The second part of the report provides three commentaries that assess the articles' implications for researchers (by Dr. Susumu Higuchi), educators (by Jeffrey Lee), and policy-makers (by Godfrey Robson).

To view the report, visit www.ICAP.org

Allied Domecq Social Report 2004 'Responsible Thinking'

Domecq's first Social Report, 'Responsible Thinking'. is divided into three sections, 'Inside Allied Domecq', 'Taking a Wider Perspective', and 'Alongside and Worldwide'.

'Inside Allied Domecq' includes discussion the need to balance the need for profit with the environment and society.

'Taking a Wider perspective' looks at the issues surrounding alcohol in society, supply chains and the environment. Recognising that alcohol is not just another consumer product and that although alcohol gives great pleasure to many, it can also cause harm if not used responsibly.

'Alongside and Worldwide' looks at Allied Domecq and its actions in the

community, ranging from initiatives to provide information about alcohol to teenagers, such as the @Bristol exhibition (see Social and Policy), to funding 'cop in

shops' in the US to prevent teenagers buying alcohol illegally.

The report highlights Allied Domecq's involvement in the debate about alcohol, and the company's work alongside scientific, medical and the public health community to develop of a balanced public health policy .

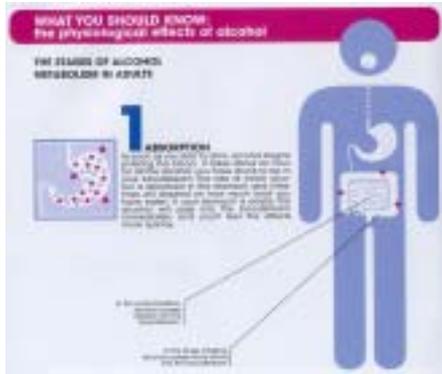
Allied Domecq has written its own marketing and advertising guidelines setting out how alcohol can be marketed in a responsible way, to prevent the depiction or encouragement of excessive drinking. They are the first major drinks company to ask for external advice on new marketing campaigns

The report can be view by visiting www.allieddomecqplc.com/



Educ Alcool ‘Be Prepared to Talk to Your Children about Drinking’

At 14, nearly two-thirds of children in Quebec have already taken a drink. The results of research show that 90% of all



Quebecers said that they believed that parents are responsible for teaching children about drinking and telling them about problems related to alcohol abuse. However, parents are not generally aware of how important it is for them to talk to their children about alcohol, and the earlier the better.

“Be Prepared to Talk to your Children” was produced after two years of effort. It is based on research assisted by the Universite de Montreal and an organisation specialised in producing

pedagogical aids. The leaflets have been distributed in Quebec schools to all 9-10 year olds.

The guide provides parents with information to help educate their children about drinking and gives advice as to how parents can help to equip their children to handle certain alcohol-related situations. The guide contains sections for age bands ranging from 8 to 18.

The guide can be view on-line at www.educalcool.qc.ca

Profile: Ellen Mack M.D.

Ellen Mack, together with her husband Edward Gomez and their nephew, winemaker Patrick Melley, conceived and founded Russian Hill Estate Winery in 1997. Here she finds great contentment as she nurtures her vineyards amidst stunning views of the Russian River Valley. As President of Russian Hill, Ellen is responsible for many aspects of managing the winery but her primary interests are vineyard development, including site selection and variety/clonal selection with an aim to find the perfect complement for the respective soils and climate.

Formerly a neurologist and neuro-oncologist with the University of California at San Francisco, Ellen stepped away from a promising

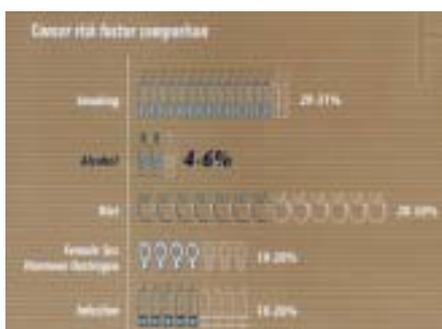
academic career to devote all of her attention to the winery. She approaches medicine and winemaking with the same philosophy. “Both are a science and an art form; they require a balance between two different types of thinking,” she explains. Her husband Ed says, “Ellen was intuitively an excellent physician and that is also true with her foray into viticulture.”

One of her great success stories is ELLEN’S BLOCK. *“This was a new, but forlorn, vineyard block that really seemed to be failing. It presented so many challenges and needed so much attention that consultants suggested ripping it out. But I saw promise in those vines and nurtured the vineyard block into one of our favorite Syrah sources. I found the experience a gratifying culmination of science, art, and passion,”* explains Ellen.



Dr Mack is active in both the wine and medical communities as an officer of the Russian River Valley Winegrowers and of the Society of Medical Friends of Wine. She also serves on the Research and Education Committee of the Wine Institute and is interviewed frequently by national media, including CNN, ABC News, and Discovery Health Channel, as a source for scientific perspectives on wine and health

‘Drinking to Your Health’ - New Zealand Beer, Wine and Spirits Council



This booklet aims to provide balanced and accurate information on the health benefits of moderate and responsible alcohol consumption and demonstrate to readers how beer, and alcohol in general, can be part of a healthy lifestyle.

The booklet gives advice on how to drink safely with moderate drinking being one factor in having a healthy life-style, and looks at specific areas of medical research where alcohol has been proved to have a beneficial effect. It revisits old myths

about alcohol and health by informing readers of some of the latest international medical research in this area.

Chief Executive Nicki Stewart writes *“We believe that this initiative will assist with a better understanding of what constitutes a responsible drinking culture and environment within New Zealand”.*

For more information visit www.beerwsc.co.nz

ORGANISATIONS

UNITED KINGDOM

ALCOHOL CONCERN

Waterbridge House, 32-36 Loman Street, London SE1
00ETel: (0207) 928 7377 Fax: (0207) 928 4644
website www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

ALCOHOL EDUCATION and RESEARCH COUNCIL

Abell House, John Islip Street, London SW1P 4LH
Tel: (0207) 217 5276

HEALTH EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1 9TX
Tel: (020) 72985656 Fax: (020) 77259031
email: enquiries@hpe.org.uk
website: www.hpe.org.uk and www.wrecked.co.uk

THE MEDICAL COUNCIL on ALCOHOLISM

3 St. Andrew's Place, London, NW1 4LB
Tel: (0207) 487 4445 Fax: (0207) 9354479

THE PORTMAN GROUP

7-10 Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, London W1G 9DQ
Tel: 020 7907 3700 Fax: 020 7907 3710
website: www.portman-group.org.uk

ALCOHOL FOCUS SCOTLAND

2nd Floor 166 Buchanan Street, Glasgow G1 2NH
Tel: 0141-572 6700 Fax: 041-333 1606

BRITISH BEER and PUB ASSOCIATION

Market Towers, 1, Nine Elms Lane, London, SW8 5NQ
Tel: 020 7627 9191 Fax: 020 7627 9123
email: jwitheridge@beerandpub.com
website www.beerandpub.com

THE WINE & SPIRIT ASSOCIATION

Five Kings House, 1 Queen Street Place, London EC4R 1XX
Tel: 020 7248 5377 Fax: 020 7489 0322
e-mail: wsa@wsa.org.uk Website: www.wsa.org.uk

USA, CANADA, SOUTH AMERICA, AUSTRALIA

WINE AMERICA

1200 G Street NW, Suite 360, Washington DC 20005
Tel: (800) 879 4637 Fax: (202) 347 6341
email: info@americanwineries.org
website: www.americanwineries.org

AMERICAN WINE ALLIANCE FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

website: www.alcohol-AWARE.com

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

1995 Broadway, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10023-5860
Tel: (212) 362-7044 Ext. 234 Fax: (212) 362-4919
email: kava@acsh.org website: www.acsh.org

BEER INSTITUTE

122 C Street, NW #750, Washington DC 20001
Tel: (202) 737-2337 Fax: (202) 737-7004
email: info@beerinstitute.org
website: www.beerinstitute.org

DISTILLED SPIRITS COUNCIL OF THE US

1250 Eye Street, NW, Suite 400, Washington DC 20005
Tel: (202) 628-3544
website: www.discus.org

PROYECTO CIENCIA VINO Y SALUD

Facultad de ciencias Biológicas, Casilla 114 D. Santiago, Chile
Tel: /Fax: (56-23) 222 2577
email: vinsalud@genes.bio.puc.cl

EDUC' ALCOOL

606, Cathcart, Suite 700, Montréal, Québec, H3B 1K9
Canada Tel: (514) 875-7454
email: hsacy@educalcoool.qc.ca website: www.educalcoool.qc.ca

THE AMERICAN BEVERAGE INSTITUTE

1775 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 1200 Washington, D.C. 20006 Tel: 202.463.7110
website: www.americanbeverageinstitute.com

FISAC

(Fundacion de Investigaciones Sociales A.C.) Francisco Sosa
230, coyocacan CP 04000 Mexico DF - Mexico

THE NAPA VALLEY VINTNERS ASSOCIATION

Phone - 707-963-3388 Fax - 707-963-3488
website www.napavintners.com

HEALTH EDUCATION FOUNDATION, INC.

2600 Virginia Avenue, NW Washington DC 20037
Tel: (202) 338.3501 Fax: (202) 965.6520
email: hefmona@erols.com

ICAP

International Center for Alcohol Policies
1519 New Hampshire Avenue, NW Washington DC 20036
Tel: (202) 986-1159 Fax: (202) 986-2080
website: www.icap.org

THE CENTURY COUNCIL

1310 G Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20005-3000 Tel: (202) 637-0077 Fax: (202) 637-0079 Email: washde@centurycouncil.org
website: www.centurycouncil.org

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF WINEGRAPE GROWERS

601 University Avenue, Suite 135 Sacramento, CA 95825
email: karen@cawg.org
website: www.cawg.org

THE WINE INSTITUTE

425 Market Street, Suite 1000, San Francisco, CA 94105, USA Tel: (415) 512-0151 Fax: (415) 442-0742

LODI-WOODBRIDGE WINEGRAPE COMMISSION

2545 West Turner Road Lodi, CA 95242 USA
email: mark@lodiwine.com
website www.lodiwine.com

OLDWAYS PRESERVATION & EXCHANGE TRUST

266 Beacon Street Boston, MA 02116 617.421.5500
Fax: 617.421.5511 website: www.oldwayspt.org

THE AUSTRALIAN WINE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

P O Box 197, Glen Osmond 5064, South Australia, Australia. Tel: 61 8 8303 6600 Fax: 61 6 303 6601
website www.awri.com

Brewers of Europe

Rue Caroly 23-25, B-1060 Bruxelles Tel: (+32.2) 672 23 92 Fax: (+32.2) 660 94 02
email: info@brewersofEurope.org
website: www.brewersofEurope.org

Forum of Taste and Education

Livornostraat 13 b 5 rue de Livourne - Brussel 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium
Tel: 32 2 539 36 64 Fax: 32 2 537 81 56
email: forum.taste.education@skynet.be
website www.forum-taste-education.com

Enterprise et Prevention

13, Rue Monsigny, 75002 Paris, France
Tel: 00-33-53-43-80-75
email: enterprise@wanadoo.fr
website: www.soifdevivre.com

IREB

19, avenue Trudaine, 75009 Paris
Tel: +33 (1) 48 74 82 19 Fax: +33 (1) 48 78 17 56
email: ireb@ireb.com website: www.ireb.com

OIV

18 rue d'Aguesseau, 75008 Paris, France
Tel: +33 (0) 1 44 94 80 94 Fax: +33 (0) 1 42 66 90 63
email: oiv@oiv.int website: www.oiv.int

EUROPE

STIVA

Benoordenhoutseweg 22-23, 2596 BA, The Hague, The Netherlands Tel: +31 (0)70 314 2480 Fax: +31(0) 70 314 24 81
email: Hanneke.Heeres@STIVA.nl
website: www.stiva.nl

Scandinavian Medical Alcohol Board

Vandværksvej 11 DK - 5690 Tommerup
Tel: 45 64 75 22 84 Fax: 45 64 75 28 44
email: smab@org
website: www.smab.org

Deutsche Wein Akademie GMBH

Gutenbergplatz 3-5, 55116 Mainz
Tel.49-6131-282948 Fax: 49-2641-203667
email: fradera@deutscheweinakademie.de
website: www.deutscheweinakademie.de

FIVIN

Plaza Penedés, 3, 3,08720 Vilafranca del Penedés, Barcelona, Spain
Tel: 0034 (93) 890 45 45
Fax: 0034 (93) 890 46 11

GODA

Gode Alkoholdninger, Kattesundet 9, DK-1458 København K, Denmark Tel: 33 13 93 83 Fax: 33 13 03 84 email: info@goda.dk
website: www.goda.dk

FIVS International Federation of Wines & Spirits

18, rue d'Aguesseau, F-75008 - PARIS France
Tél. 33 01 42 68 82 48 Fax 33 01 40 06 06 98
email: fivs.ass@wanadoo.fr

THE AMSTERDAM GROUP

Rue Wiertz 50/28
B-1050 Brussels Belgium
Tel: +32 2 401 61 35 Fax: + 32 2 401 68 68
email: info@amsterdamgroup.org
website www.amsterdamgroup.org

FUNDACION ALCOHOL Y SOCIEDAD

Diego de Leon 44,2 ES 28006 Madrid
Tel: + 34 91 745 08 44 Fax: + 34 91 561 8955
website: www.alcoholysociedad.org

MEAS Limited

Merrion House
1/3 Fitzwilliam Street Lower
Dublin 2, Ireland
Tel: 00 353 1 611 4811 Fax: 00 353 1 611 4808
website www.meas.ie

The European Federation of Wine & Spirit Importers and Distributors (EFWSID)

Five Kings House
1 Queen Street Place
London EC4R 1XX
Tel +44 (0) 20 7248 5377 Fax +44(0) 20 7489 0322
email: EFWSID@wsa.org.uk