

Consumption of Alcohol, an Addictive Carcinogen, Cannot Be a Healthy Lifestyle Choice!

Dear Editor:

Stockwell et al.'s (2016) meta-regression analysis of studies about alcohol use and mortality risk (3,998,626 individuals; 367,103 deaths) showed evidence that low-volume alcohol consumption has no net mortality benefit compared with lifetime abstinence or occasional drinking. This deserves comment.

First, their critical and robust analysis showed evidence that “abstainer biases crucially determine the shape of the risk relationship between alcohol consumption and mortality” (Stockwell et al., 2016, p. 196). The alcohol lobby used this bias when sponsoring studies to promote the French paradox (Jackson et al., 2005; Stockwell et al., 2012). This French exception has never been confirmed by interventional trials and is not observed when avoiding selection bias (Holmes et al., 2014).

Second, alcohol boosts flavor in drinks, but above all, from medical and public health perspectives it is an addictive carcinogen causing dose-related increases in prevalence of oral cavity, pharynx, esophagus, and breast cancers, beginning at the 1–2 drink/day level (Rehm & Shield, 2014).

Third, the conclusion, “These findings have implications for public policy, the formulation of low-risk drinking guidelines” (Stockwell et al., 2016, p. 185) must have a rapid implementation in the United States. Indeed, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) has claimed for too long, “Moderate alcohol consumption may have beneficial effects on health” (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2015). The NIAAA can copy and paste the draft guidance recently proposed in the United Kingdom: Drinking any level of alcohol regularly carries a health risk for anyone, but if men and women limit their intake to no more than 14 units a week it keeps the risk of illness like cancer and liver disease low—a good way to reduce alcohol intake being to have several alcohol-free days a week (Department of Health, 2015). France will probably continue to fly in the face of evidence and common sense. The chairman of the French society of cardiology repeatedly stated in the main French medical journal, “The consumption of a moderate amount of wine improves cardiovascular health and increases survival,” despite having been provided with the evidence to the contrary (Brailion & Dubois, 2015, p. 128). Moreover, Gerber, claiming she is an expert of the French Food Environment and Work Safety Agency, very recently supported “the cardioprotective effects of low to moderate alcohol consumption” (Hoffman & Gerber, 2016, p. 1). However, she failed to disclose her potential conflict of interests with “Vin et Société,” an organization who

claims to be acting for the 500,000 French “actors” of wine and grape-vine (Anonymous, 2011).

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