

Wine May Lessen Radiation Therapy Side Effects

Patients undergoing treatment for breast cancer see benefits from moderate drinking

A clinical study by an Italian oncology center has found that women who drink wine while undergoing radiation treatment see fewer side effects than women who don't drink.

The Radiotherapy and Palliative Care Unit, along with the research department at the Catholic University of Campobasso, in southern Italy's Molise region, examined the extent of tissue damage on 348 women who were being treated for breast cancer.

Radiation therapy for cancer involves bombarding afflicted areas with radiation to kill cancerous cells. A medication regimen to protect against extensive radioactive tissue damage accompanies this process. But often, the study text states, "these agents have several drawbacks, in that they are very expensive, they have sometimes severe side effects, and they have the potential to protect tumor cells as well as healthy cells from the effects of radiation." While antioxidants and vitamins A, C and E offer some protection against tissue damage in animal studies, "a diet that is radio-protective in humans has yet to be identified."

The Italian researchers looked at components of the Mediterranean diet, which they theorize is protective against cancer, in order to see if one aspect or another may be helpful for those undergoing the discomfort of radiation therapy.

The Mediterranean diet is high in seafood and low-fat meats, fresh fruits and vegetables. Olive oil is the fat of choice and the consumption of red meat is rare. The moderate

consumption of wine, usually red, also accompanies the evening meal. And it was this final point that researchers decided to examine, since wine components have been shown to have "radio-protective effects" in previous studies.

The 348 women in the study were treated with radiation therapy for their breast cancer between February 2003 and June 2007 at the clinic. The level of tissue damage from the radiation was measured by taking skin samples.

The researchers compared the extent of damage in the skin tissue to the drinking habits of the women in an attempt to assess any relationship. All of the women in the study who drank (103 of the study participants) drank wine: 22 drank half a glass per day, 59 drank one glass per day, 20 participants drank two glasses a day, and two women drank three or more per day.

The scientists found that women who drank a glass per day had the least amount of skin toxicity, with 15% tissue damage, compared to 40% in the control group, 30% among the half a drink per day group and 32 percent for women who drink two glasses daily.

When the scientists crunched the data, the moderate daily consumption of wine is associated with 75% skin lesion reduction compared to teetotalers.

Wine Spectator, July 22, 2009

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An Irish priest from Boston is driving down to New York and gets stopped for speeding in Connecticut. The state trooper smells alcohol on the priest's breath and then sees an empty wine bottle on the floor of the car.

He says, "Father, have you been drinking?" "Just water," says the priest. The trooper says, "Then why do I smell wine?"

The priest looks at the bottle and says, "Good Lord! He's done it again!"

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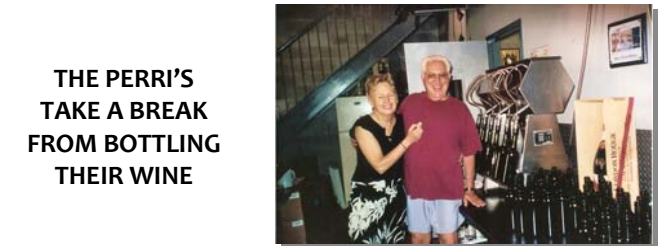
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