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The alcohol-intake paradox: caution in a field of developing evidence. Response



La paradoja del consumo de alcohol: cautela ante una evidencia en desarrollo. Respuesta

To the Editor,

We are writing in reference to our editorial,¹ in which we mention that the most effective measures shown to extend life expectancy include moderate alcohol intake (5–14.9 g of ethanol/d). A healthy lifestyle, including moderate intake of alcoholic beverages, led to a reduction of 74% in all-cause death, 65% in cancer mortality, and 82% in cardiovascular mortality.²

Numerous studies have found that moderate alcohol intake has a protective effect on the cardiovascular system. Meta-analysis results³ indicate that a moderate intake of alcoholic beverages—mainly wine—lowers the risk of breast cancer, provided that it is part of a healthy dietary pattern. These studies take into consideration the presence of confounding factors, such as the lack of “patients” in the control arm (abstainers), avoid inaccurate records on the use of alcoholic beverages, specify the alcohol intake pattern (differentiating between daily alcohol intake and cumulative weekend or binge drinking), and look at the effect of healthy dietary patterns, such as the Mediterranean diet. Additionally, *in vitro* studies have identified various possible mechanisms for the protective effects of moderate alcohol intake, supporting the plausibility of epidemiologic results.

In conclusion, as clinicians we have sufficient evidence to counsel patients according to alcohol consumption: *a*) patients who drink in excess should be urged to reduce intake to less than 20 g of alcohol a day for men and less than 10 g for women; *b*) patients with moderate alcohol intake should be reminded to avoid any increase in intake, and *c*) patients who abstain should never be advised to drink alcohol. All of these patients should be encouraged to eat a healthy diet, namely the Mediterranean diet, and those who drink alcohol should be directed to preferably drink wine or beer, always with meals.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Both authors contributed equally to this manuscript.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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Ramón Estruch^{a,b,*} and Emilio Sacanella^{a,b}

^aServicio de Medicina Interna, Hospital Clínic, IDIBAPS, Universidad de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain

^bCentro de Investigación Biomédica en Red de Fisiopatología de la Obesidad y Nutrición (CIBEROBN), Spain

* Corresponding author:

E-mail address: restruch@clinic.cat (R. Estruch).

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