

# Will drinking wine make you live longer?

by Philip Ulanowsky

In recent years, a growing chorus of opinion has been singing the praises of moderate wine consumption as an antidote to cardiovascular disease. In America, the popularity of this chorus has increased speedily, its refrain sounding a cheery note against the haunting chant of the new Grim Reaper's refrain, "Cholesterol." Does moderate wine consumption truly represent a breakthrough of modern medicine?

The answer to this question is far more politically intriguing than you might imagine. What appears as a dietary question, has shown itself to involve agencies with far-reaching social agendas. Hence, we find in this little issue perhaps less hard, scientific fact respecting human metabolism than a neat lesson in political method. Before proceeding to the medical evidence, let us take a look at a couple of the players involved.

One is the chief American wine lobby group, the Wine Institute in San Francisco. For many years now, the institute has been taking every possible opportunity to publish medical studies showing that moderate wine consumption is healthy; indeed, that it has a protective effect on the cardiovascular system, compared with both abstinence and immoderate drinking. The institute has publicized the results of study after study confirming this "U"-shaped curve, and has campaigned for changes in archaic, Prohibition-like policy guidelines in relevant federal departments.

This campaign, however, took a new turn several years ago, when the institute endorsed a radical version of the typical diet-pyramid schematic. Diet pyramids indicate recommended relative amounts of different food types—the least at the top, the most in a broad swath across the bottom. The institute-endorsed version, referred to as a traditional Mediterranean diet, has at its pinnacle only a tiny triangle for red meat consumption, which it allows "several times a month or somewhat more often in smaller quantities."

For comparison, the United States Department of Agriculture's pyramid—which is for *daily* consumption—has fats, oils, and sweets in the triangle at its pyramid's top, with the direction, "Use sparingly." The swath below is divided into two equal sides, the "milk, yogurt, and cheese group" and the "meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts group," both of which are indicated at 2-3 servings. In the radical pyramid, the corresponding swath is divided, instead, top to bottom, with a thin band for sweets, a thinner one for eggs, more for poultry and more again for fish, all with the

direction, "A few times per week." Olive oil, cheese, yogurt (butter is entirely absent), fruits, vegetables, grains, pasta, breads, and potatoes get "daily" approval.

Ah, but the "Mediterranean" includes moderate wine consumption as a daily recommendation—the reason for the institute's delight.

Not long after the institute's promotion of this scheme, the World Health Organization (WHO) gave its endorsement to this same pyramid, along with a questionable outfit called the Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust, which purports to educate Americans about healthy dietary patterns from "traditional cultures." The WHO endorsement on a big promotional poster of the pyramid, was indicated as coming separately from the European regional office and the WHO-FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) Collaborating Center for Nutrition at Harvard School for Public Health. WHO divided on the issue, however, with the Substance Abuse Division soon thereafter publicly denouncing moderate alcohol consumption, and a spokesman for the endorsing European office stressing that WHO's pyramid support "is acknowledgment for a cultural model and not an endorsement for any particular food component," according to an institute newsletter. In fact, on the front of a poster showing the pyramid, a disclaimer states that it is only preliminary and subject to change. The back of the poster is a long explanation, full of disclaimers.

Nonetheless, the endorsement was cause for the institute to celebrate with champagne. Seen from their perspective, the WHO endorsement provides a big name to throw around in their political battle to make the centuries-old European custom of daily wine consumption more palatable to Prohibitionist-prone America. However one may agree with the intent, this little victory is but a deal with the devil.

As dietary science clearly shows, red meat is the most concentrated and complete source of protein in our diet. Ideological politics, not science, have given it a bad rap. First of all, most of the scare about cholesterol is off-base. For instance, veteran researcher George V. Mann, M.D., a collaborator in the landmark Framingham Study on heart disease, showed in an article in *21st Century Science & Technology* (May-June 1989), that the actual causes of heart disease are not understood, and making cholesterol a universal boogeyman is unscientific. Many societies, he notes, live on a diet of mainly meat and milk—a diet far higher in saturated fat than the traditional American diet—and yet show less cholesterol in their blood and virtually no incidence of heart disease. Dr. Mann further points out, that even the correlations between blood-cholesterol levels and heart disease are highest in young adults and then taper off, virtually disappearing after age 50.

"A large number of trials of diets and drugs in human subjects have been undertaken," reports Dr. Mann, "and without exception these have failed to show that dietary restriction of fat and cholesterol or change in the nature of the



*Red meat is the most concentrated and complete source of protein in our diet. Moderate consumption of wine seems to be healthy, too. So, who benefits if the wine producers and the cattlemen are at odds?*

fat in the diet will prevent heart disease.” So-called risk factors, he notes, are widely misused and popularly misunderstood. He should know; he helped pioneer their use in heart studies.

A purported medical anomaly made famous on CBS’s *60 Minutes* a couple of years ago, the so-called French Paradox, provided a similar type of evidence. In France, where the traditional diet includes high percentages of saturated fats, heart disease rates are dramatically lower than in the United States. Why? One reason hypothesized, was wine in the French daily diet.

Now, the evidence that a little wine in the diet is generally healthful is scarcely news. References to this go back to Biblical times, at least, and appear with frequency throughout history, as does the evidence that overdoing it takes its toll. More recently, however, study after study has shown that moderate wine consumption appears to lower the risk for heart disease compared with both heavy drinking *and* abstinence. The correlation appears to be very strong; the actual cause remains unclear.

In addition to water and alcohol, wine contains hundreds of identifiable components, many of which are, of course, also found in fresh fruits. The hypothesis that the alcohol (ethanol) itself is healthy in small amounts, appears to have reasonable basis. Moderate alcohol consumption seems to raise HDL (high-density lipoproteins, or “good” cholesterol) levels while improving HDL-to-LDL (low-density lipoproteins, or “bad” cholesterol) ratios. Various other components, such as anti-oxidant phenolic compounds, credited with helping to avoid blood platelet-aggregation (which can lead to blocked arteries and clots) have been much publicized in the institute’s literature in the past year. How these or other particular components of wine interact with the body in the totality of diet and metabolism, however, is another question.

There are just too many variables to pin causality on a single one in regard to health effects and disease risks that are, themselves, not even fully understood.

Some French doctors interviewed on the CBS show, noted that the European “lifestyle” tends to remain more traditional—regular and more relaxed meals, less snacking in between, for example, and a less sedentary daily routine than Americans have adopted.

### **Theft by persuasion**

Leaving aside all this uncertain medical evidence, however, let us return to the diet pyramids and place them in their proper context. That context is the decades-long effort by the neo-malthusians to drastically reduce the world’s population, beginning with the billions of people of darker skin. The United Nations was founded by these circles, and WHO, like other U.N. branches, has come down frequently on that side of the policy line.

Economic development is the bane of malthusian ideologues, since it proves all their cataclysmic chatter of overpopulation, industrial pollution, technological oppression, and so on, to be just that. Among the early benefits of industrial development, of course, is improvement in diet. A nation’s sovereign control over an adequate food supply is another. Neither of these suits the malthusian policymakers. When outright theft of these rights is politically infeasible, however, gaining them by deception is the approved method.

Hence, we began hearing in the 1970s of “appropriate technology” for the underdeveloped countries—labor-intensive, “traditional” technologies that required no modern infrastructure or electrical power. In line with this, we heard that “traditional” medicines, such as herbal remedies and whatever some local witch-doctor might concoct—not oppressive, modern medicine—were appropriate for these peo-

ples. Now we are hearing the message with a new slant. After years of propaganda in the developed countries about cholesterol, chemical "poisons" in food, carcinogens in the refrigerator (and under the bed), and the benefits of "natural" foods, now we are getting a "traditional Mediterranean diet."

In this context, it is not difficult to see the consequences an embrace of this radical diet plan will offer, simply by drawing the most obvious implications from all the components. All the most efficient forms of protein—vital to the body's immune system—are reduced. What's left in the pyramid? Well, largely, we have fruits and vegetables, which we always hear are contaminated by pesticides and so on; the infamous Alar scare about an apple protectant shows how easily supplies may be manipulated. Then, we have potatoes and the grains. Aside from the notorious control of the grain markets by the major cartels, the grains represent a rather inadequate diet for a modern world.

It must also be remembered that world production of all food commodities, meat and grain alike, is coming under enhanced manipulative price-control through the so-called "free trade" treaties that are dominating international relations. Hence, all vectors point to a single situation in which the world's diet may be increasingly manipulated at will by a relatively few controlling hands in the right positions.

When the Wine Institute several years ago released its endorsement for the new wine-friendly pyramid, president John DeLuca was asked by this reporter at the press luncheon, if he fully endorsed the restricted red meat provision of the scheme. He agreed that the fear of red meat and so forth was unfounded, but said of the plan, "It's a start."

This is the kind of response that makes a social controller smile. In post-World War II America, in particular, and because the work of behavioral psychologist Kurt Lewin gained currency, corporate and political life have increasingly come under the domination of Lewin's so-called group dynamics management. In brief, this involves "profiling" of a target group and individuals, and employing induced stress to manipulate their behavior toward a desired outcome. All the more recent "consensus-building" programs are spin-offs of this.

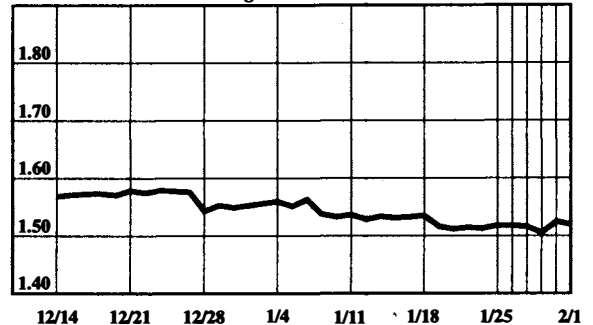
It is not surprising, then, that any single-issue lobbying group, seeing itself struggling against various opponents (and indeed, in this case, the neo-Prohibitionist movement is both real and significant), would grab for any perceived opening, even "just a start."

It would be healthier for everyone, however, if organizations such as the Wine Institute and its constituents were to join forces with, say, the cattlemen's associations and other independent traditional farmers' groups, to explode the lies being peddled by those who intend to control and diminish, through one ruse or another, the supply of quality foods upon which America and other nations have grown. After all, isn't that the sort of friendly relationship such producers would have in the Mediterranean?

## Currency Rates

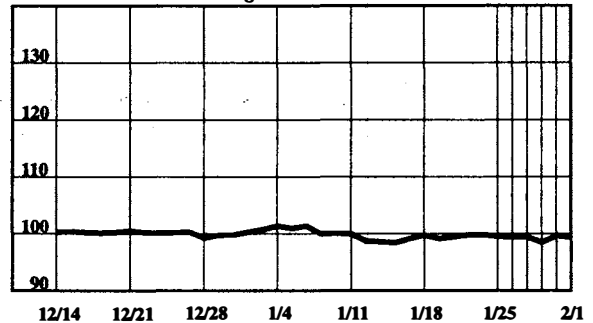
### The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



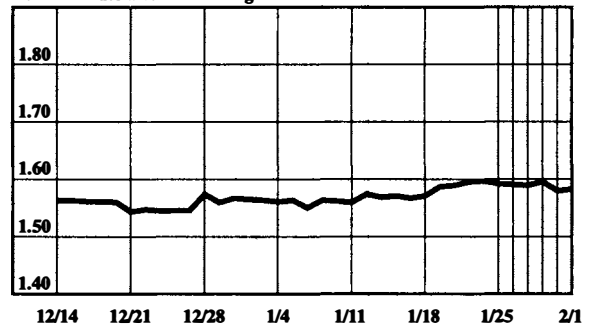
### The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



### The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



### The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

