

Reading Passage (205 words): Benefits of Drinking Wine

France is famously known for her sprawling vineyards on the outskirts of some of its heavily populated urban centers. But it now may be known for something else: its improving health rates among its citizens. However, what it is that makes the French people so healthy? The answer may lie in a bottle of wine.

A new study by original "French Paradox" researcher Serge Renaud offers evidence that moderate wine consumption is associated with a significant reduction in all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease and cancer among men. The findings (*Epidemiology*, March, 2012) were based on a large cohort study of middle-aged men in eastern France. Daily, moderate drinkers who consumed mostly wine were compared to non-drinkers and heavy drinkers.

Renaud and colleagues from the University of Bordeaux also found that moderate wine consumption (2-3 glasses a day) was associated with a 30% reduction in the death rate from all causes, a 35% percent reduction in death rates from cardiovascular disease, and an 18-24% reduction in death rates from cancer. "The results of the present study," the researchers write, "appear to confirm the speculation that the so-called French Paradox is due, at least in part, to the regular consumption of wine.

Writing Prompt: Summarize the lecture explaining how it calls into question the points made in the reading passage.

Lecture (445 words): Possible Flaws with the Research Study

Many like to drink wine, and, of course, are eager to hear current research suggest that drinking it can lead to health benefits. But before we all dash to the store to get our next bottle of wine, let's take a closer look at some of the claims made in the new study.

First of all, the study claims that drinking moderate amounts of wine can lead to a noticeable reduction of 30% in the deaths of middle-aged men in Eastern France. One problem with this study is that it only looked at middle-aged men in France, all of whom had the statistical element of age, gender, and nationality in common. Because it did not get a random selection of individuals—men and women, young and old—the results of this study cannot be projected to the population of France as a whole and certainly not to other populations of people living in other countries.

Second of all, the study also claims that those who drink 2-3 glasses of wine each day experience a 35% reduction in death rates from cardiovascular disease. When comparing the two groups of middle-aged men, the study compared the non-drinkers and heavy drinkers to those who drank moderate amounts of wine. The problem is that the study is not able to rule out other variables such as other foods and exercises which may also have had an effect in reducing the heart disease rates among the wine drinkers. For example, it may be possible that abstinence of red meats and a regular routine of exercise among the one group were additional reasons other than drinking wine which may have made the one group healthier than the other.

Finally, let's address the claim that those who drank 2-3 glasses of wine had a 18-24% reduction in death rates from cancer. Even the study itself admitted that this was speculation. Again, because the study did not randomly draw from the population at large, the results can not be projected to the population as a whole. And, let's be honest. We do not even know what causes cancer in most cases, and we certainly do not know definitively if drinking moderate amounts of wine has a role in preventing the deadly disease.

But do not get me wrong. That the study appears to suggest that drinking wine has some health benefits is encouraging, but we will need to do more in-depth studies over an extended period of time, especially drawing randomly from the population at large, before we will know for sure what the health benefits to drinking wine are. So, raise your glass to that.