

New Study Refutes the 'Wine Will Kill You' Nonsense



By Alex Berezow — May 3, 2018



Credit: Mick Stephenson
[mixpix/Wikipedia](#) [1]

A few weeks ago, the media ran wild with an outlandish claim that an extra glass of wine will take 30 minutes off of your life.

Though the media, particularly *The Guardian*, deserved much of the blame for this fiasco, the journal and the authors themselves deserve an equal share. The [study was poorly designed](#) [2] with numerous glaring flaws, and its results were sensationalized. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this was a coordinated publicity stunt.

A new paper in *Circulation*, a journal published on behalf of the American Heart Association, shows the exact opposite. In fact, it demonstrates that moderate drinking can be integrated into a healthy lifestyle.

Five Factors Linked to a Longer Life

The authors analyzed data on 78,865 women and 44,354 men. They were interested to determine the effect that five factors had on the risk of death: (1) never smoking; (2) a body mass index (BMI) of 18.5 to 24.9; (3) 30+ minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity; (4) moderate alcohol intake; and (5) a high diet quality score. Their results are shown in the chart below:

	Person-Years	Deaths Resulting From Any Cause	
		Cases	HR (95% CI)
No. of 5 low-risk factors†			
0	458 169	9286	1.0 (Referent)
1	1 101 853	16 329	0.79 (0.77–0.81)
2	1 053 250	10 908	0.61 (0.59–0.62)
3	596 784	4 408	0.47 (0.45–0.49)
4	208 683	1 113	0.35 (0.33–0.37)
5	32 964	123	0.26 (0.22–0.31)

The baseline group (labeled "0") is considered those people who did not possess any of the five factors. The right column, which represents the "hazard ratio," shows a distinct trend: Each additional factor added to a person's life is associated with a lower risk of death. The group of people who had all five factors (labeled "5") had a 74% reduced risk of death compared to the baseline group.

The authors also examined each factor separately. The results for alcohol consumption are shown below:

	Person-Years	Deaths Resulting From Any Cause	
		Cases	HR (95% CI)
Alcohol consumption, g/d			
0	1 037 840	16 611	1.27 (1.24–1.30)
1–4.9	1 087 210	10 454	1.03 (1.00–1.06)
5–14.9	773 186	8 041	1.0 (Referent)
15–29.9	345 034	4 009	0.99 (0.96–1.03)
≥30	208 434	3 052	1.25 (1.19–1.30)

The left column considers the group that consumes 5 to 14.9 grams of alcohol per day (roughly one drink per day, depending on the alcohol content) to be the baseline. As shown in the right column, people who drink 15 to 29.9 grams per day (roughly two drinks) had almost the exact

same risk of death as those who had one drink per day. ***This directly refutes the sensationalist study reported earlier.***

Notably, people who drink too much alcohol (30+ grams per day, which is roughly three drinks) have a 25% higher risk of death compared to the baseline group. Additionally, the group who drank no alcohol also had a higher risk of death, approximately by 27%. Of course, that may not be due directly to avoiding alcohol; instead, teetotalers may have other health issues and could have been told by a doctor to avoid booze. This may be especially true for patients on certain types of medication.

The point, however, is clear: There is absolutely nothing wrong with moderate alcohol consumption. Indeed, it can be integrated into a healthy lifestyle.

A Tale of Two Papers

The paper that claimed an extra glass of wine will shorten your life circled the globe in a matter of minutes. On the other hand, this reasonable (and far better) paper will reach relatively few people. Such is the power of the academic PR hype machine combined with a gullible, sensationalist press.

Source ^[3]: Yanping Li, An Pan, Dong D. Wang, Xiaoran Liu, Klodian Dhana, Oscar H. Franco, Stephen Kaptoge, Emanuele Di Angelantonio, Meir Stampfer, Walter C. Willett, Frank B. Hu. "Impact of Healthy Lifestyle Factors on Life Expectancies in the US Population." *Circulation* 137(18). Published: 1-May-2018. DOI: 10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.117.032047

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[1] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wine#/media/File:Tempranillowine.jpg>

[2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/04/13/new-alcohol-study-mostly-hype-journal-authors-media-blame-12839>

[3] <http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/early/2018/04/25/CIRCULATIONAHA.117.032047>