

Reservations about resveratrol: Another supplement bites the dust

By ACSH Staff — May 13, 2014



If you are in the something purple in a bottle will make me live

longer camp, you will no doubt be disappointed by a new study in JAMA that was published by Dr. Richard D. Semba and colleagues of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore.

The purple in this case was the antioxidant resveratrol a miracle compound found in grapes that was supposed to do pretty much everything, from keeping you from aging to raising your bowling average. It didn't quite work out.

The Hopkins group followed 783 men and women aged 65 or older from two villages in Italy for eleven years. They indirectly measured dietary resveratrol consumption by analyzing urine samples and looking for breakdown products in the urine. The study was designed to determine if resveratrol levels were associated with a reduction in inflammation, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and death. They were not.

Semba's group concluded ...this prospective study of nearly 800 older community-dwelling adults shows no association between urinary resveratrol metabolites and longevity. This study suggests that dietary resveratrol from Western diets in community-dwelling older adults does not have a substantial influence on inflammation, cardiovascular disease, cancer, or longevity.

This should come as no surprise to anyone who followed GlaxoSmithKline's ordeals in this area. [The company paid \\$720 million in 2008](#) [1] to purchase Sirtis a company founded primarily to develop a drug called SRT501 a special formulation of resveratrol. But GSK discontinued trials in 2010 saying that "[it] may only offer minimal efficacy while having a potential to indirectly exacerbate a renal complication common in this patient population.

In other words, it did nothing useful but had kidney toxicity. Perhaps not the buy of the century.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom says, Like Harlequin romance novels, the characters change, but the ending is always the same: When supplements with unsubstantiated health claims are actually

studied, the supplements are found to be of no benefit. But maybe harm.

In fact the whole concept of the utility of antioxidants is sketchy at best.

ACSH friend Dr. David Seres, the Director of Medical Nutrition at Columbia University Medical Center has frequently commented on the potential harm of antioxidants: When tested properly in randomized trials, many antioxidants have actually proven to be more harmful than helpful. For example, vitamin E supplementation predisposes some people to prostate cancer, while vitamin C is associated with an increase in the incidence of lung cancer in smokers. The current laws have created a nutritional Wild West; these substances should be far better regulated.

Same old, same old.

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[1] <http://www.fiercebiotech.com/story/weak-efficacy-renal-risks-force-gsk-dump-resveratrol-program/2010-12-01>