Global Trends - Wine Industry Key Elements

Wine and health — why is there so much argument, pro and con?

We all know that every second media report extolls the health benefits of wine, while every alternate one warns us of the evils of wine (see Health effects of wine). Even the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans seems unsure about the matter. This leads to confusion among the populace, even engendering cynicism. However, leaving aside the idea that the various authors might have their own agenda when writing their articles, this situation is not actually unexpected.

There are three very obvious reasons why media reports about human health might contradict each other.

BIOLOGY: First, biology is complex, which may sound trite, but it contains the essence of the problem. Not only is biology more complex than we imagine, it frequently turns out to be more complex than we can imagine. The current Covid-19 pandemic is a perfect case in point — the more we learn about the SARS-CoV2 virus, the more we realize just how complex is the human immune response to this virus.

EXPERIMENTS: The second of our three reasons is that it is impractical to actually carry out the medical experiments required to study human health. For example, there is much discussion at the moment about the effectiveness of having the public wear medical-style face-masks during the current pandemic. This is because, as far as I know, no-one has ever done an experiment to find out. It would not be easy! The same thing applies to understanding transmission of the virus from person to person (Scientists estimate the speed and distance of coronavirus transmission when people cough, sneeze, speak — and run).

TIME: The third of our three reasons for apparently contradictory medical results is that human health is a long-term issue, while experiments don’t usually get funded for all that long. Most experiments on humans end before there has been much effect on the participants’ health. Indeed, it can take decades to find out about health issues; and even the longevity of of the scientists themselves can cut short such experiments!

Conclusion

So, there you have it — three good reasons why reports of the outcome of medical experiments might contradict each other. Does moderate wine consumption improve your health? In some ways, apparently “yes”; but don’t overdo your drinking — after all, there is always this thing called "too much".

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