



PENDARVES

Premium Wines from the Wine Doctor

Dementia

Dementia is a global loss of mental function and this is usually a gradual process during old age. The most common cause is Alzheimer's disease, (named after the doctor who first described it) where a special protein called amyloid replaces brain tissue. The next most common form is caused by serial strokes or death of brain tissue, due to a blockage of blood flow to the brain called multi- infarct dementia. The third most common cause of dementia is due to alcohol abuse causing Korsakoff's syndrome or Wernicke's encephalopathy. Lesser forms of dementia after these leading causes include, Huntington's Chorea, (a genetic condition), Jacob Creutzfeldt Disease (due to a virus) and Kuru Kuru (a virus transmitted by cannibalism in New Guinea).

The best way to prevent dementia is by consuming red or white wine in moderation daily. The Bordeaux study by Professor J.M. Orgogozo of the University of Bordeaux in 1997, showed that wine could reduce dementia by up to 80%, which is an incredible amount that has unfortunately been ignored by health policy makers. Other studies such as the American Veterans study and a recent Dutch study have also shown the very significant preventative qualities of wine in moderation.

So how does wine prevent dementia?

Vascular disease, which causes strokes and heart attacks, is caused when bad cholesterol (low density lipoprotein) is oxidised and incorporated into the artery wall to form an atheromatous plaque. This plaque swells up with more and more bad cholesterol and eventually bursts. The body responds by sealing this rupture in the artery wall, by forming a clot which finally blocks the artery, causing death of the tissue supplied by that artery i.e. a stroke in the brain.

Wine lowers the bad cholesterol levels, raises the levels of good cholesterol (high density lipoprotein) which clears away and recycles bad cholesterol from atheromatous plaque, acts as an anticoagulant and has the most potent antioxidants in nature (resveratrol, quercetin and epicatechin), five times more potent than the benchmark antioxidants vitamins C and E.

Thus wine significantly reduces vascular disease so reducing strokes and keeping blood vessels patent (open), so that they can deliver the vital oxygen and glucose necessary to keep the brain alive and functioning. The antioxidants also stop the breakdown of the interconnections of nerve cells (neurones) by their dendrites. Degeneration of these dendritic interconnections also contributes to dementia and wine has been shown in the Milan study to significantly prevent this, because resveratrol increases the activity of MAP kinase (mitrogen activated protein kinase) an enzyme necessary for good dendritic function. Obviously if one consumes wine in moderation (i.e. maximum of 4 standard drinks a day for a man and 2 standard drinks a day for women, where a standard drink is equal to 10 gms of alcohol i.e. 120-150 mls. of wine depending on its % alcohol content) then one is not going to develop dementia due to alcohol abuse, but prevent Alzheimers and multi-infarct dementia by up to 80%.

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