

Regular Wine Consumption in Chronic Heart Failure Impact on Outcomes, Quality of Life, and Circulating Biomarkers

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Background—Moderate, regular alcohol consumption is generally associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular events but data in patients with chronic heart failure are scarce. We evaluated the relations between wine consumption, health status, circulating biomarkers, and clinical outcomes in a large Italian population of patients with chronic heart failure enrolled in a multicenter clinical trial.

Methods and Results—A brief questionnaire on dietary habits was administered at baseline to 6973 patients enrolled in the Gruppo Italiano per lo Studio della Sopravvivenza nell'Insufficienza Cardiaca-Heart Failure (GISSI-HF) trial. The relations between wine consumption, fatal and nonfatal clinical end points, quality of life, symptoms of depression, and circulating biomarkers of cardiac function and inflammation (in subsets of patients) were evaluated with simple and multivariable-adjusted statistical models. Almost 56% of the patients reported drinking at least 1 glass of wine per day. After adjustment, clinical outcomes were not significantly different in the predefined 4 groups of wine consumption. However, patients with more frequent wine consumption had a significantly better perception of health status (Kansas City Cardiomyopathy Questionnaire score, adjusted $P < 0.0001$), less frequent symptoms of depression (Geriatric Depression Scale, adjusted $P = 0.01$), and lower plasma levels of biomarkers of vascular inflammation (osteoprotegerin and C-terminal proendothelin-1, adjusted $P < 0.0001$, and pentraxin-3, $P = 0.01$) after adjusting for possible confounders.

Conclusions—We show for the first time in a large cohort of patients with chronic heart failure that moderate wine consumption is associated with a better perceived and objective health status, lower prevalence of depression, and less vascular inflammation, but does not translate into more favorable clinical 4-year outcomes.

Clinical Trial Registration—URL: <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov>. Unique identifier: NCT0033633.

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Key Words: biological markers ■ quality of life ■ wine

Alcohol consumption and its effect on health is a complex topic largely influenced by nationality, ethnicity, age, social, and family status of patients forming study populations. Wine can be considered a unique example of this complexity because it is customarily a daily component of a standard meal in some areas and populations, but only an occasional event in others, and formally forbidden because of religious constraint in large populations. In the absence of randomized controlled trials, observational studies suggest that moderate and regular alcohol consumption but not binge drinking¹ is associated with lower risk of cardiovascular events, particularly myocardial infarction,² and incident heart failure (HF).³ Moreover, in 2006, the AHA suggested that after a cardiovascular event patients may continue drinking moderate amounts of alcohol, if they already did before.⁴

Clinical Perspective on p 437

The bulk of evidence for a protective effect of moderate wine intake on incident cardiovascular events comes from studies in the general population without cardiovascular disease or in hypertensive, post myocardial infarction (MI), diabetic patients.³⁻⁹ Recently, data have been obtained within the INTERHEART case-control study in >27 000 individuals from 52 countries showing that this protection may not be effective across different countries.²

A significantly lower incidence of all-cause deaths and cardiovascular events was reported in 11 248 Italian post MI patients enrolled in the GISSI Prevenzione trial.¹⁰ However, the issue is still controversial, as there are no controlled prospective trials.^{11,12}

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Four studies previously addressed this subject in patients with HF or left ventricular (LV) dysfunction: 6313 patients from the Studies of Left Ventricular Dysfunction (SOLVD) trial,¹³ 2231 post MI patients from the Survival and Ventricular Enlargement (SAVE) trial,⁸ 449 male US physicians,¹⁴ and 117 Italian patients aged ≥ 65 years.¹⁵ In chronic HF, dietary indications and control are of paramount importance but, at the same time, different pathophysiologic determinants and variability in clinical profiles are unavoidable confounding factors.¹⁶

GISSI-HF, a double-blind randomized trial found that n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (1 g/d), but not rosuvastatin (10 mg/d), slightly but significantly reduced mortality and hospital admissions for cardiovascular reasons in patients with symptomatic chronic HF of any cause.^{17,18} Because all patients completed a brief diet questionnaire at baseline, including daily wine, beer, and spirits intake, we investigated the possible relationship between the latter and the clinical outcome indicators, with the aim of verifying whether the benefit of moderate wine consumption shown in a population of post-MI patients from GISSI Prevenzione applied also to patients with symptomatic chronic HF. In addition, in 2 subgroups of patients from the same study, we assessed the relations between wine consumption and several circulating biomarkers or indicators of health status perception. This enabled us to search for relations between wine, outcomes, biohumoral, and behavioral factors in a contemporary population of patients with chronic HF with any level of LV ejection fraction (LVEF).

Methods

The GISSI-HF trial was a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, multicenter study that enrolled 6975 patients with clinical evidence of chronic, stable HF (New York Heart Association II–IV), of any cause and level of LVEF.^{17,18} The trial investigated the effect of adding 1 g of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids per day or placebo to standard therapy in patients with moderate-to-severe HF.

In the prospectively planned biomarker substudy, blood samples were collected at randomization and 3 months later from 1235 patients recruited in 51 clinical centers. Investigators participated on a voluntary basis and ensured that all eligible patients would have been enrolled in the present substudy, to minimize selection bias. The study was approved by the local ethics committee and informed consent was obtained from all patients before the study started.

The other predefined substudy was quality of life (QoL), depression, and cognitive function, which enrolled 1465 patients to whom questionnaires on QoL, depression, and cognitive function were serially administered by attending nurses.¹⁹

Wine Consumption

In the main GISSI-HF study, a brief questionnaire on dietary habits was administered to each patient at study entry. Wine consumption was divided into 4 categories, such as patients who did not drink wine, those who drank it occasionally, and those with low to moderate (1–2 glasses per day) and high (≥ 3 glasses per day) consumption. In the general study population, baseline data included patient's characteristics, cardiovascular risk factors, medical history, causes and New York Heart Association class of HF, physical examination and medical treatment. Primary end points were total mortality, cardiovascular mortality and hospital admissions, total and for cardiovascular reasons, specifically for worsening HF, arrhythmias, myocardial infarction, and stroke.

Health Status Perception and Depression

The validated Italian version of the Kansas City Cardiomyopathy Questionnaire²⁰ was used to define the perception of health status. This specific 23-item health status measure encompasses several domains,

including physical limitations, symptoms (frequency, severity, and recent changes) self-efficacy, social interference, and QoL.²¹ The summary score ranges from 0 to 100, higher scores denoting better health. Health status was defined as good (76–100), fair (51–75), poor (26–50), and worst (0–25). The Geriatric Depression Scale is a 15-item well-validated questionnaire that measures emotional factors in depression.²² Each yes/no item corresponds to a depressive symptom. Subjects with 5 to 8 symptoms were considered to have mild depression and those with >9 symptoms moderate-to-severe depression.

Circulating Biomarkers

In the subgroup of 1235 patients enrolled in the biological substudy, a blood sample was collected at randomization; EDTA-plasma was stored at -70°C in a centralized biological repository. The circulating levels of adiponectin, high-sensitivity C-reactive protein, pentraxin-3 (PTX3), osteoprotegerin, N-terminal pro B-type natriuretic peptide, midregional proatrial natriuretic peptide, high-sensitivity cardiac troponin T, midregional proadrenomedullin, C-terminal provasopressin (copeptin), mannose-binding lectin, and C-terminal proendothelin-1 were measured, blind, in a central laboratory, as previously reported.^{23–27}

Statistical Analyses

All the statistical analyses were done on the imputed data set. A multiple imputation technique based on a Markov chain Monte Carlo approach²⁸ was used to estimate the missing values for each missing data point. For most variables, $\approx 1\%$ of the data were missing. However, data were missing in 9.5% of the study population for fibrinogen, 5.9% for bilirubin, 4.2% for uricemia, 4.1% for low-density lipoprotein-cholesterol, 3.5% for high-density lipoprotein-cholesterol, and 3.0% for CK total.

Trends across categories were analyzed using respectively the Cochran–Armitage trend tests and linear regression analysis for categorical and continuous variables. Cox proportional hazard models were used to evaluate the independent associations between wine intake and outcome events.

Hazard ratios were evaluated in an unadjusted model and then in an adjusted one for major potential risk factors based on biological plausibility and associations with exposures/outcomes in the present population, for example, demographic, clinical, and lifestyle risk factors.

Trends in hazard ratios across categories of wine consumption were examined using the variable as continuous (eg, coded 0, 1, and 2).

The Geriatric Depression Scale score and the Kansas City Cardiomyopathy Questionnaire score were expressed as median (interquartile range) and the median test was used for their analysis across wine consumption categories.

Survival curves were adjusted by Cox-regression according to corrected group prognosis method. This method calculates the survival curve for each unique combination at all levels of the covariates with a Cox model and obtains the adjusted survival curve as a weighted average of those individual curves, in which weights are based on the sample sizes in each combination.^{29,30}

All probability values are 2-sided. All computations used the SAS statistical package (SAS Institute Inc, Cary, NC).

Results

Patients' Characteristics in Relation to Wine Consumption

The patients declared a low consumption of alcoholic beverages other than wine: 2.4% drank at least 1 glass of beer per day, whereas only 1.0% drank 1 glass of spirits. For this reason, we limited our main analyses to wine consumption. The distribution of wine consumption of the 6973 patients in the GISSI-HF study is shown in Table 1. Age showed no specific trends across groups, although the difference between wine consumption groups reached statistical significance. Among

Table 1. Baseline Characteristics of 6973 Patients Enrolled in the Gruppo Italiano per lo Studio della Sopravvivenza nell'Insufficienza Cardiaca-Heart Failure Trial, in Relation to Wine Consumption

	Daily Wine Consumption				Overall n=6973 (100%)	P for trend
	Never n=2461 (35.3%)	Sometimes n=1325 (19.0%)	1–2 glasses/d n=2570 (36.8%)	≥3 glasses/d n=617 (8.9%)		
Patients' characteristics						
Age, y	67 (11)	66 (11)	68 (10)	67 (10)	67 (11)	0.01
Age >70 years	1060 (43.1)	499 (37.7)	1152 (44.8)	236 (38.3)	2947 (42.3)	0.93
Women	880 (35.8)	332 (25.1)	297 (11.6)	7 (1.1)	1516 (21.7)	<0.0001
Heart disease risk factors						
BMI, kg/m ²	27 (5)	27 (4)	27 (4)	27 (4)	27 (4)	0.004
SBP, mm Hg	127 (18)	125 (18)	126 (18)	128 (18)	126 (18)	0.90
DBP, mm Hg	77 (9)	76 (10)	77 (9)	79 (10)	77 (10)	0.10
Heart rate, beats per min	73 (14)	72 (14)	72 (14)	73 (15)	73 (14)	0.002
Current smoking	308 (12.5)	181 (13.7)	363 (14.1)	134 (21.7)	986 (14.1)	<0.0001
History of hypertension	1421 (57.7)	698 (52.7)	1377 (53.6)	313 (50.7)	3809 (54.6)	0.0003
NYHA class						<0.0001
II	1439 (58.5)	855 (64.5)	1698 (66.1)	431 (69.9)	4423 (63.4)	
III	929 (37.8)	442 (33.4)	819 (31.9)	175 (28.4)	2365 (33.9)	
IV	93 (3.8)	28 (2.1)	53 (2.1)	11 (1.8)	185 (2.7)	
LVEF (%)	33.3 (8.9)	32.7 (8.3)	32.9 (8.2)	33.5 (8.4)	33.1 (8.5)	0.69
LVEF>40%	255 (10.4)	112 (8.5)	222 (8.6)	64 (10.4)	653 (9.4)	0.21
Medical history						
Admission for HF in previous year	1319 (53.6)	613 (46.3)	1191 (46.3)	260 (42.1)	3383 (48.5)	<0.0001
Previous AMI	985 (40.0)	599 (45.2)	1100 (42.8)	223 (36.1)	2907 (41.7)	0.98
Previous stroke	135 (5.5)	59 (4.5)	129 (5.0)	22 (3.6)	345 (5.0)	0.12
Diabetes mellitus	805 (32.7)	386 (29.1)	655 (25.5)	127 (20.6)	1973 (28.3)	<0.0001
CABG	382 (15.5)	250 (18.9)	528 (20.5)	110 (17.8)	1270 (18.2)	0.0002
PCI	300 (12.2)	196 (14.8)	310 (12.1)	60 (9.7)	866 (12.4)	0.19
ICD	166 (6.8)	122 (9.2)	172 (6.7)	37 (6.0)	497 (7.1)	0.47
Pacemaker	319 (13.0)	178 (13.4)	324 (12.6)	70 (11.4)	891 (12.8)	0.35
History of atrial fibrillation	462 (18.8)	255 (19.3)	496 (19.3)	111 (18.0)	1324 (19.0)	0.98
Peripheral vascular disease	219 (8.9)	105 (7.9)	220 (8.6)	66 (10.7)	610 (8.8)	0.52
COPD	528 (21.5)	249 (18.8)	578 (22.5)	178 (28.9)	1533 (22.0)	0.002
Neoplasia	79 (3.2)	46 (3.5)	102 (4.0)	29 (4.7)	256 (3.7)	0.048
Cause of heart failure						
Ischemic	1197 (48.6)	709 (53.5)	1282 (49.9)	278 (45.1)	3466 (49.7)	0.53
Dilative	703 (28.6)	349 (26.3)	787 (30.6)	186 (30.2)	2025 (29.0)	0.09
Hypertensive	393 (16.0)	185 (14.0)	369 (14.4)	89 (14.4)	1036 (14.9)	0.13
Other	77 (3.1)	39 (2.9)	50 (2.0)	29 (4.7)	195 (2.8)	0.64
Nondetectable/unknown	91 (3.7)	43 (3.3)	82 (3.2)	35 (5.7)	251 (3.6)	0.42
Physical examination						
Pulmonary rales	715 (29.1)	301 (22.7)	608 (23.7)	145 (23.5)	1769 (25.4)	<0.0001
Third heart sound	655 (26.6)	328 (24.8)	601 (23.4)	153 (24.8)	1737 (24.9)	0.02
Mitral insufficiency	1608 (65.3)	849 (64.1)	1610 (62.7)	343 (55.6)	4410 (63.2)	<0.0001
Aortic stenosis	55 (2.2)	24 (1.8)	55 (2.1)	9 (1.5)	143 (2.1)	0.43
ECG findings						
QRS>120 ms	824 (33.5)	445 (33.6)	903 (35.1)	207 (33.6)	2379 (34.1)	0.39
Atrial fibrillation	390 (15.9)	189 (14.3)	458 (17.8)	102 (16.5)	1139 (16.3)	0.09
Pathological Q waves	538 (21.9)	325 (24.5)	605 (23.5)	136 (22.0)	1604 (23.0)	0.40
Left ventricular hypertrophy	455 (18.5)	219 (16.5)	537 (20.9)	127 (20.6)	1338 (19.2)	0.02

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued

	Daily Wine Consumption				Overall n=6973 (100%)	P for trend
	Never n=2461 (35.3%)	Sometimes n=1325 (19.0%)	1–2 glasses/d n=2570 (36.8%)	≥3 glasses/d n=617 (8.9%)		
Laboratory tests						
Fibrinogen, mg/dL	376 (107)	379 (113)	364 (109)	351 (106)	370 (109)	<0.0001
WBC, mm ⁻³	7384 (2158)	7464 (2123)	7291 (2045)	7254 (2134)	7353 (2109)	0.05
Serum creatinine, mg/dL	1.20 (0.59)	1.20 (0.43)	1.21 (0.43)	1.14 (0.34)	1.20 (0.48)	0.21
eGFR (mL/min ⁻¹ per 1.73 m ⁻²)	63 (23)	64 (22)	64 (21)	70 (20)	64 (22)	<0.0001
Serum bilirubin, mg/dL	0.84 (0.64)	0.83 (0.56)	0.84 (0.50)	0.93 (0.91)	0.85 (0.61)	0.02
AST (U/L)	25 (31)	24 (12)	24 (14)	26 (15)	24 (21)	0.92
Hemoglobin, mg/dL	13.4 (1.7)	13.6 (1.6)	13.9 (1.6)	14.3 (1.5)	13.7 (1.7)	<0.0001
Total cholesterol, mg/dL	189 (43)	189 (42)	191 (42)	201 (45)	191 (43)	<0.0001
Serum HDL-cholesterol, mg/dL	46 (12)	46 (13)	48 (13)	51 (15)	47 (13)	<0.0001
Blood glucose, mg/dL	121 (48)	121 (51)	116 (43)	114 (37)	119 (46)	<0.0001
Medical treatment						
ACE inhibitors	1860 (75.6)	988 (74.6)	2014 (78.4)	511 (82.8)	5373 (77.1)	<0.0001
ARBs	484 (19.7)	291 (22.0)	463 (18.0)	82 (13.3)	1320 (18.9)	0.0008
ACE inhibitors/ARBs	2293 (93.2)	1233 (93.1)	2415 (94.0)	577 (93.5)	6518 (93.5)	0.33
β-blockers	1590 (64.6)	906 (68.4)	1635 (63.6)	390 (63.2)	4521 (64.8)	0.26
Spironolactone	1004 (40.8)	534 (40.3)	968 (37.7)	233 (37.8)	2739 (39.3)	0.02
Diuretic drugs	2247 (91.3)	1179 (89.0)	2303 (89.6)	530 (85.9)	6259 (89.8)	0.0005
Digitalis	990 (40.2)	469 (35.4)	930 (36.2)	198 (32.1)	2587 (37.1)	<0.0001
Oral anticoagulant drugs	667 (27.1)	374 (28.2)	793 (30.9)	174 (28.2)	2008 (28.8)	0.02
Aspirin	1165 (47.3)	647 (48.8)	1235 (48.1)	310 (50.2)	3357 (48.1)	0.31
Other antiplatelet agents	285 (11.6)	138 (10.4)	244 (9.5)	49 (7.9)	716 (10.3)	0.002
Nitrates	909 (36.9)	468 (35.3)	905 (35.2)	190 (30.8)	2472 (35.5)	0.01
Calcium-channel blockers	267 (10.9)	133 (10.0)	240 (9.3)	69 (11.2)	709 (10.2)	0.32
Amiodarone	436 (17.7)	270 (20.4)	536 (20.9)	116 (18.8)	1358 (19.5)	0.04
Statin (open)	570 (23.2)	306 (23.1)	560 (21.8)	141 (22.9)	1577 (22.6)	0.37

Continuous variables are reported as mean (SD), discrete variables as numbers (%) of patients for which the variable was present, percentages may not add to 100 because of missing values or rounding. *P* for trend <0.05 for differences across categories of wine consumption. ACE indicates angiotensin-converting enzyme; AMI, acute myocardial infarction; ARB, angiotensin II type 1 receptor blocker; AST, aspartate aminotransferase; BMI, body mass index; CABG, coronary artery bypass graft surgery; COPD, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; DBP/SBP, diastolic/systolic blood pressure; eGFR, estimated glomerular filtration rate; HDL, high-density lipoprotein; HF, heart failure; ICD, implantable cardioverter defibrillator; LVEF, left ventricular ejection fraction; NYHA, New York Heart Association; PCI, percutaneous coronary intervention; and WBC, white blood cells.

cardiovascular risk factors, smoking was positively correlated with wine consumption and the incidence of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and neoplasia was higher in groups with higher wine consumption; an inverse correlation was observed with history of hypertension. Wine consumption was positively associated with a more favorable New York Heart Association functional class. Hospital admission in the year before study entry or a history of diabetes mellitus was more frequent in patients with no wine consumption. These clinical characteristics were consistent with greater severity of HF in patients who never or seldom drank wine, as evidenced by physical examination and more frequent treatment with agents, such as angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors, angiotensin-receptor blockers, diuretics, spironolactone, digitalis, and nitrates.

Among laboratory values, hemoglobin and glomerular filtration rate were positively correlated with increasing frequencies of wine consumption (Table 1). In the absence of

a statistically significant difference in history or presence of atrial fibrillation, oral anticoagulant agents and amiodarone were prescribed significantly more often to wine consumers.

Wine Consumption and Outcomes

Clinical events during the 3.9-year follow-up showed a lower incidence in patients with the highest wine consumption, with 1 exception, all-cause hospitalizations, which were somewhat more frequent in the ≥3 glasses of wine/d group (Table 2). Nonetheless, after adjustment for confounders, the differences were no longer significant for any of the clinical outcomes (Table 3). Adjusted survival curves by wine consumption categories are presented in Figure 1. Two interaction terms were added to the Cox multivariable models, rosuvastatin × wine consumption and n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids × wine consumption: interactions with rosuvastatin, but not with n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids were statistically significant for both all-cause death and the combined end point (Table 3).

Table 2. Clinical Outcomes During Follow-Up by Levels of Wine Consumption

	Daily Wine Consumption			
	Never 2461 (35.3%)	Sometimes 1325 (19.0%)	1–2 glasses/d 2570 (36.8%)	≥3 glasses/d 617 (8.9%)
Causes of death				
All causes	716 (29.1)	350 (26.4)	752 (29.3)	150 (24.3)
Worsening HF	231 (9.4)	126 (9.5)	244 (9.5)	50 (8.1)
Presumed arrhythmic	204 (8.3)	107 (8.1)	224 (8.7)	43 (7.0)
CV death	523 (21.3)	274 (20.7)	572 (22.3)	108 (17.5)
Sudden death	222 (9.0)	121 (9.1)	240 (9.3)	49 (7.9)
Hospitalization				
All causes	1368 (55.6)	775 (58.5)	1492 (58.1)	378 (61.3)
CV reasons	1127 (45.8)	663 (50.0)	1239 (48.2)	292 (47.3)
HF	685 (27.8)	384 (29.0)	739 (28.8)	165 (26.7)
Ventricular arrhythmias	59 (2.4)	53 (4.0)	96 (3.7)	20 (3.2)
Total events				
All cause death or hospitalization for CV causes	1413 (57.4)	781 (58.9)	1489 (57.9)	350 (56.7)
Total MI	85 (3.5)	47 (3.6)	89 (3.5)	15 (2.4)
Total stroke	86 (3.5)	46 (3.5)	75 (2.9)	18 (2.9)
Total HF	718 (29.2)	394 (29.7)	761 (29.6)	170 (27.6)
Total arrhythmias	255 (10.4)	151 (11.4)	308 (12.0)	60 (9.7)

Data are reported as number and percentage of the 6973 patients. Total events include both fatal and nonfatal events. CV indicates cardiovascular; HF, heart failure; and MI, myocardial infarction.

In other words, the analysis of the direction of the interaction suggests that rosuvastatin tended to be associated with worse outcomes than placebo in patients drinking wine, than in those not drinking it at all or just occasionally.

Table 3. Cox Proportional Hazard Models for Wine Consumption and Clinical Outcomes

	Model	Sometimes n=1325 (19.0)	1–2 glasses/d n=2570 (36.9)	≥3 glasses/d n=617 (8.9)	<i>P</i> for Trend	Wine×n-3 PUFA interaction	Wine× rosuvastatin interaction
All-cause mortality	Unadjusted	0.89 (0.79–1.02)	1.00 (0.91–1.11)	0.79 (0.66–0.94)	0.18	0.04	0.02
	Fully adjusted	0.91 (0.80–1.03)	0.96 (0.86–1.07)	0.91 (0.76–1.09)	0.31	0.29	0.004
All cause death or hospitalization for CV causes	Unadjusted	1.04 (0.96–1.14)	1.00 (0.93–1.08)	0.93 (0.82–1.04)	0.42	0.22	0.07
	Fully adjusted	1.07 (0.98–1.17)	1.01 (0.94–1.09)	1.04 (0.92–1.18)	0.64	0.30	0.03
Worsening HF	Unadjusted	1.03 (0.91–1.17)	1.03 (0.92–1.14)	0.90 (0.76–1.06)	0.62	0.89	0.15
	Fully adjusted	1.06 (0.94–1.21)	1.08 (0.97–1.21)	1.12 (0.94–1.34)	0.11	0.94	0.05
Sudden death	Unadjusted	1.00 (0.80–1.24)	1.03 (0.86–1.24)	0.83 (0.61–1.14)	0.66	0.53	0.47
	Fully adjusted	0.99 (0.79–1.24)	0.98 (0.81–1.19)	0.90 (0.65–1.24)	0.63	0.79	0.37

Data are shown as hazard ratio and 95% confidence interval in univariate and multivariable Cox proportional hazard models, with patients never drinkers as the reference category. Covariates for adjustment: age, sex, body mass index, ischemic cause of HF, New York Heart Association class, admission for HF in the previous year, previous stroke, smoking, history of hypertension, diabetes mellitus, implantable cardioverter defibrillator, peripheral vascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, peripheral edema, pulmonary congestion, aortic stenosis, left ventricular ejection fraction, heart rate, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, pathological Q waves, atrial fibrillation, left ventricular hypertrophy, hemoglobin, total cholesterol, triglycerides, blood glucose, glomerular filtration rate, serum potassium, serum sodium, total creatine kinase, glycohemoglobin, digitalis, spironolactone, diuretics, angiotensin II type 1 receptor blockers, β-blockers, oral anticoagulants, antiplatelets, nitrates, amiodarone, antidepressants, n-3 PUFA, and rosuvastatin and their interactions with wine consumption. HF indicates heart failure; and PUFA, polyunsaturated fatty acids.

QoL and Depression Substudy

The distribution of wine consumption of the 1465 patients participating in the QoL, depression, and cognitive function substudy is shown in Table 4. The characteristics of this subpopulation of GISSI-HF were similar to those of the main study population in terms of medical history, clinical presentation, and pharmacological treatment.¹⁷ Kansas City Cardiomyopathy Questionnaire score showed a significant correlation between wine consumption and better health status perception ($P<0.0001$), so that patients with a score <50 (poor or worst) were 21.0% in those who never drank, while they were only 7.4% in those drinking at least 3 glasses of wine a day (Table 4). The depression score, Geriatric Depression Scale, showed an inverse correlation ($P=0.01$), with 18.4% of the nondrinkers being classified as having moderate-to-severe depression, while they were only 5.0% among those drinking ≥ 3 glasses a day (Table 4). All these differences were statistically significant after full adjustments (Table 4).

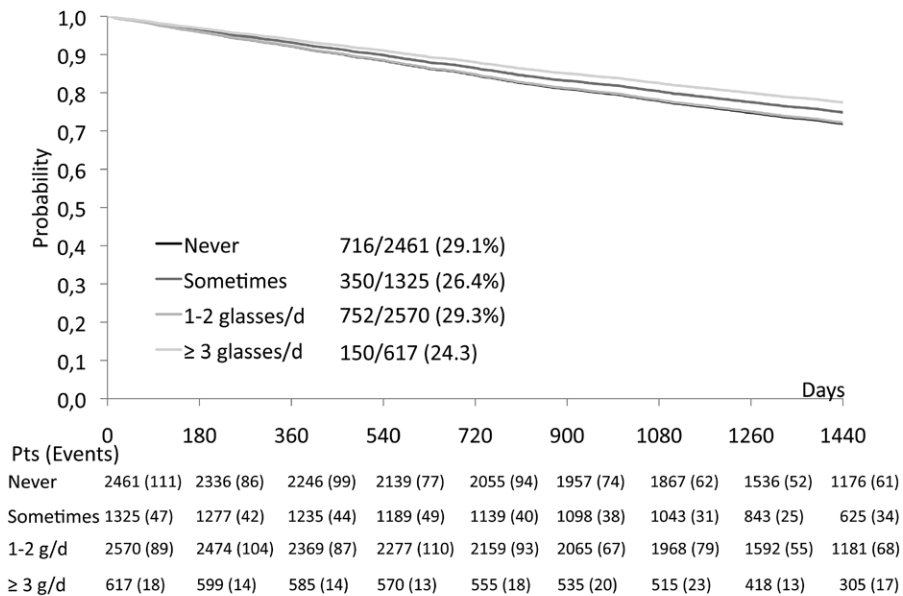
Circulating Biomarkers

Figure 2 shows the baseline levels of several circulating biomarkers related to cardiovascular function or inflammation, according to wine consumption. The plasma levels of osteoprotegerin, a member of the tumor necrosis factor superfamily, and of the endothelin precursor C-terminal proendothelin-1, a powerful endogenous vasoconstrictor, were inversely related to wine consumption (adjusted $P<0.0001$). A similar but less significant trend was observed for PTX3, a marker of vascular inflammation ($P=0.01$). The concentrations of 2 cardiac markers, N-terminal pro B-type natriuretic peptide and high-sensitivity cardiac troponin T, tended to be lower in patients drinking ≥ 3 glasses of wine per day ($P=0.04$ and 0.002 , respectively).

Discussion

In the whole population of patients with symptomatic chronic HF enrolled in the GISSI-HF trial, ≥ 2 glasses of wine daily

A Total mortality



B Total mortality or admission for CV reasons

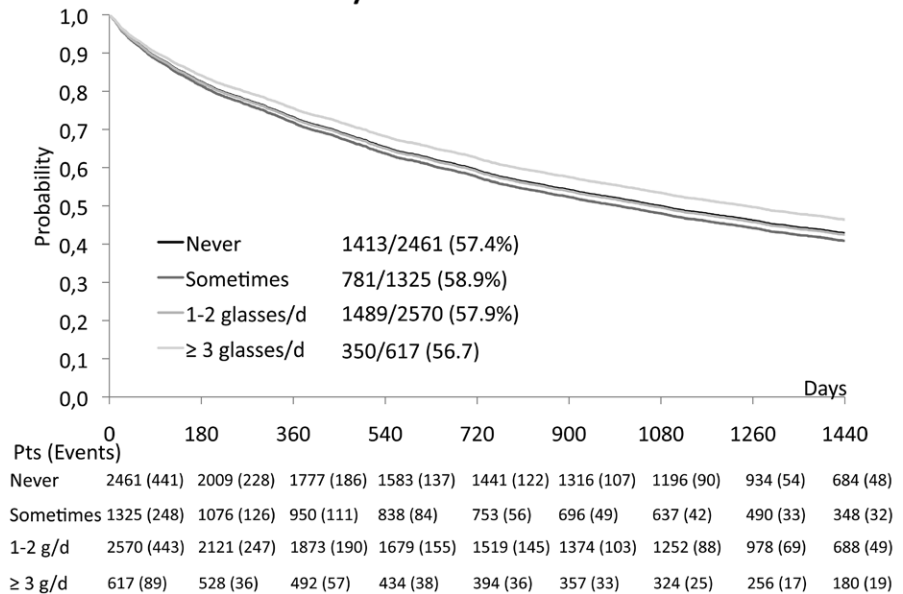


Figure 1. Adjusted survival curves for (A) all-cause mortality, (B) all-cause mortality or hospitalization for cardiovascular (CV) reasons by 4 categories of wine consumption. The variables used for adjustment are listed below Table 3.

as assessed with a diet questionnaire, were associated to lower severity of HF, better perceived QoL, and more favorable profile of inflammatory circulating biomarkers. However, the multivariate analyses adjusted for patient’s characteristics abolished the relation of wine consumption with fatal and nonfatal clinical outcomes.

Wine Consumption and Clinical Outcomes

These Italian patients aged 67 years on the average, declared a low consumption of alcoholic beverages other than wine. This is consistent with the Italian culture, more so of elderly people.

The neutral results on clinical outcomes should be compared with the existing data in HF because the largest study

reported that light-to-moderate alcohol consumption was not associated with adverse outcomes in 6313 US patients with LV dysfunction, and even reduced the risk of fatal MI in patients with ischemic cause of HF.¹⁰ In 2231 patients from SAVE trial, with an LVEF <40% after MI, light-to-moderate alcohol intake did not alter the risk of hospitalization for HF.⁸ In 449 male US physicians with HF a J-shaped relation between alcohol intake and mortality was reported, so the risk was significantly lower only in those drinking 1 to 2 glasses per day.¹⁴ In contrast, the study on 1332 Italian subjects aged ≥65 years found that alcohol consumption was associated with a 21% lower risk of death in subjects without HF, but a 29% higher risk of death in patients with chronic HF.¹⁵

Table 4. Quality of Life and Depression Scale in 1465 Patients Enrolled in the Quality of Life, Depression, and Cognitive Function Substudy

	All 1465	Wine Consumption				P Value*
		Never 489 (33.4%)	Sometimes 301 (20.5%)	1 to 2 glasses/d 554 (37.8%)	≥3 glasses/d 121 (8.3%)	
KCCQ						
Good (≥75)	822 (56.1)	225 (46.0)	173 (57.5)	347 (62.6)	77 (63.6)	<0.0001
Fair (74–50)	413 (28.2)	161 (32.9)	77 (25.6)	140 (25.3)	35 (28.9)	
Poor (25–49)	185 (12.6)	74 (15.1)	43 (14.3)	59 (10.6)	9 (7.4)	
Worst (<25)	45 (3.1)	29 (5.9)	8 (2.7)	8 (1.4)	0 (0.0)	
Median (Q1–Q3)	78.6 (59.9–90.6)	72.4 (52.9–87.5)	80.2 (59.9–89.2)	82.3 (64.8–92.7)	82.3 (70.3–94.8)	<0.0001§
Depression (GDS score)						
None (0–4)	970 (66.2)	290 (59.3)	198 (65.8)	390 (70.4)	92 (76.0)	0.01
Mild (5–8)	310 (21.2)	109 (22.3)	72 (23.9)	106 (19.1)	23 (19.0)	
Moderate/severe (≥9)	185 (12.6)	90 (18.4)	31 (10.3)	58 (10.5)	6 (5.0)	
Median (Q1–Q3)	3 (1–6)	3 (1–7)	3 (1–6)	2 (1–5)	2 (1–4)	<0.002§

GDS indicates Geriatric Depression Scale; and KCCQ, Kansas City Cardiomyopathy Questionnaire.

*Adjusted for age, sex, body mass index, ischemic cause of HF, New York Heart Association class, admission for HF in the previous year, previous stroke, smoking, history of hypertension, diabetes mellitus, implantable cardioverter defibrillator, peripheral vascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, peripheral edema, pulmonary congestion, aortic stenosis, left ventricular ejection fraction, heart rate, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, pathological Q waves, atrial fibrillation, left ventricular hypertrophy, hemoglobin, total cholesterol, triglycerides, blood glucose, glomerular filtration rate, serum potassium, serum sodium, total creatine kinase, glycohemoglobin, digitalis, spironolactone, diuretics, angiotensin II type 1 receptor blockers, β -blockers, oral anticoagulants, antiplatelets, nitrates, amiodarone, antidepressants, n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids, and rosuvastatin.

§Median test.

This study, the largest to date, supports a neutral effect of alcohol intake on the outcomes in chronic HF, after adjusting for several factors, including ischemic cause of HF, LVEF, and hypertension. A previous study from the GISSI collaboration showed that moderate wine intake, as collected with the same questionnaire, could even reduce cardiovascular events in patients after MI but substantially without overt HF.¹⁰ The reduction observed in GISSI Prevenzione was mainly because of a decrease in ischemic events such as incident MI, a potential target of wine protective action. In the placebo group of GISSI-HF, incident MI was only 0.7%, while worsening of HF was 9.5% and sudden death, presumably arrhythmic, 8.7%, thus reducing the potential benefits of wine.¹⁰

Wine Consumption and Circulating Biomarkers

In the subgroup of 1235 patients in whom circulating biomarkers were assayed, there was a consistent decrease in markers of inflammation with higher regular wine consumption even after adjustment for age, sex, and severity of HF. The independent association between wine consumption and markers of systemic inflammatory activation, known to play a role in chronic HF,³¹ has already been reported in different cardiovascular disorders.^{32,33} Moderate consumption of red wine and some of its compounds (particularly polyphenols) may confer protection in patients with documented cardiovascular disease.^{5,6,9,10} Part of this benefit is because of an improvement of endothelial dysfunction through different molecular pathways that include enhanced endothelial nitric oxide production and vasodilatation, improved redox balance and anti-inflammatory mechanisms.^{34,35} Although circulating biomarkers cannot fully capture the complexity of paracrine regulations in the

endothelium, we found that light-to-moderate wine consumption was associated with a dose-dependent reduction in the plasma concentration of a stable precursor of endothelin-1. This highly potent vasoconstrictor peptide, when elevated, is a strong predictor of bad outcome in chronic HF.^{24,36} Red wine extracts have been shown to inhibit endothelin-1 synthesis by bovine aortic endothelial cells,³⁷ presumably by altering tyrosine-kinase signaling.³⁸ Polyphenols from red wine also blunt the expression of adhesion molecules and inflammatory cytokines related to endothelial dysfunction and atherosclerosis, contributing to a reduction in HF severity.⁷

Wine consumption, even light, was associated with lower plasma levels of osteoprotegerin and of PTX3 than in patients who did not drink wine. Osteoprotegerin is a cytokine of the tumor necrosis factor receptor superfamily, expressed in vivo by endothelial cells, vascular smooth muscle cells, and osteoblasts. Initially thought to act exclusively on the skeletal and immune system, more recent evidence suggests that it also has a proatherogenic role and participates in the pathogenesis of cardiovascular diseases by amplifying the adverse effects of inflammation, hyperlipidemia, endothelial dysfunction, hypertension, and diabetes mellitus.^{39,40} PTX3 is rapidly induced in various cell subsets, such as peripheral blood leucocytes, myeloid dendritic cells, and vascular endothelium under the stimulation of inflammatory cytokines. PTX3 shares some similarities with CRP, but differs in terms of structural domain, gene organization, and cellular and tissue sources.⁴¹ In this context, high circulating osteoprotegerin and PTX3 levels might reflect an ongoing injury to endothelial cells, indicating a pro-inflammatory milieu. Together with the reduction in plasma endothelin concentration, this suggests that light-to-moderate

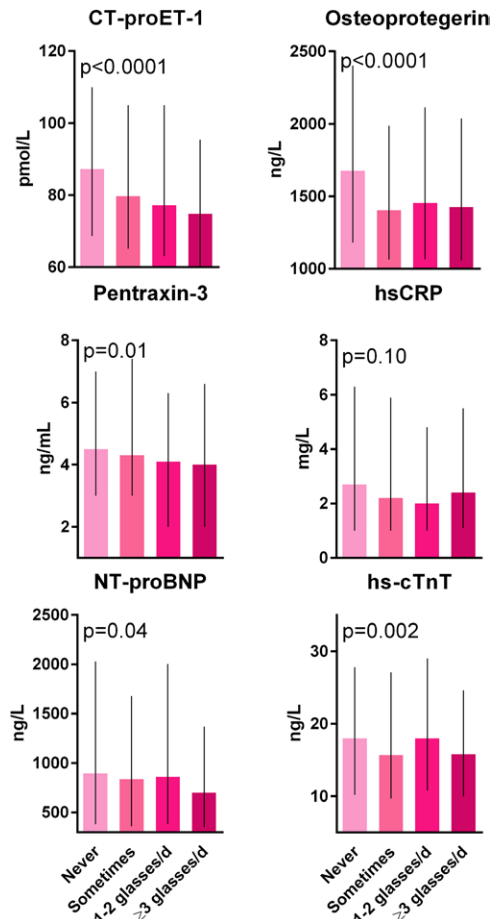


Figure 2. Median (Q1–Q3) plasma concentrations of selected circulating biomarkers in relation to wine consumption in 1235 patients with chronic heart failure from the Gruppo Italiano per lo Studio della Sopravvivenza nell’Insufficienza Cardiaca-Heart Failure study. *P* values adjusted for age, sex, and NYHA class. Multiple regression model on the ranks of the biomarkers adjusted for age, sex, and NYHA functional class. CT-proET-1, C-terminal proendothelin-1; hs-cTnT, high-sensitivity cardiac troponin T; hsCRP, high-sensitivity C-reactive protein; NT-proBNP, N-terminal pro B-type natriuretic peptide.

wine consumption is associated with an improvement in endothelial dysfunction in patients with chronic HF.

However, the pathophysiologic relevance of an anti-inflammatory action of moderate wine consumption should be seen in the light of the fact that in GISSI-HF we found that circulating inflammatory markers had little if any independent prognostic value^{23,27} and that rosuvastatin significantly decreased high-sensitivity C-reactive protein levels without affecting outcomes.¹⁸

Finally, although statistically significant, the trend between N-terminal pro B-type natriuretic peptide or high-sensitivity cardiac troponin T and red wine consumption was not clear as for other biomarkers. This is consistent with the absence of any independent relation between red wine intake and clinical outcome.

Wine Consumption, QoL, and Depression

The evidences on the benefits of wine consumption are scarce to date, as the medical literature is mainly focused on the

unhealthy consequences of alcohol drinking. Moderate wine drinkers reported better lifestyles and metabolic parameters compared with nondrinkers,⁴² lower incidence of HF,³ lower mortality,⁴³ and a better perceived health^{43–45} and psychological functioning.⁴⁶ The differences remained statistically significant after adjustment for several variables, and even within populations of the same social class.⁴³ This is the first time that such an association is reported in patients with chronic HF: in the 1465 patients in the QoL, depression, and cognitive function substudy, depression of moderate-to-high severity was significantly less frequent in patients drinking at least 1 glass of wine a day. The perception of health status, as assessed by Kansas City Cardiomyopathy Questionnaire, was significantly better in the same patients even after full adjustments. Our results are not easily comparable with other studies on general populations of Northern European countries, with different habits toward alcohol consumption and where wine drinking may be associated to a higher social background.^{42,43,46} Social class is not a confounder in our population because wine consumption is widespread and only a minority of patients drank beer or other spirits. The list of other potential confounders may include smoking, exercise, and social networks. However, Poikolainen et al⁴⁵ reported that despite these adjustments, the associations between wine consumption and perceived health remained, weakening the role of lifestyles.

In other studies, a good perception of health was independently associated with lower mortality in patients with HF,¹⁹ and depression overall,⁴⁷ specifically major depression,⁴⁸ was independently associated with a higher risk of cardiovascular and all-cause mortality. Moderate wine consumption is strongly associated with both favorable prognostic factors. Although we did not observe benefits on mortality or hospitalizations, we neither observed negative effects on health in moderate wine drinkers, highlighting that it is not necessarily a negative habit. Whether it is the wine consumption per se—and not the characteristics of the people who decide to drink wine, to account for the differences in health perception—is not clear. Because of the strength of the association, wine consumption could be a possible indicator of better attitude toward life, and not a behavior to be necessarily blamed in patients with HF.

Some limitations need to be pointed out. The dietary questionnaire used in the GISSI-HF trial did not distinguish between red and white wine, 2 beverages whose content in biologically active compounds may differ, although the differences in the cardiovascular effects of the 2 kinds of wine have been questioned.⁴⁹ For this reason, data from GISSI-HF cannot be easily compared with other populations with different types and patterns of alcohol consumption. In addition, the design of the clinical trial did not permit any causal relationship but only associations between patient-reported wine consumption and health status, which may be influenced by unreported confounding clinical variables. The patient characteristics were typical of those found in randomized clinical trials because in the general population, patients with HF are older, more often women, and more frequently with preserved LVEF.

Generated by a large and well-documented population of patients with HF, with the support of 2 complementary sets of the soft data on the QoL and circulating biomarkers, our

findings do provide a reasonably consistent and comprehensive view of this old problem of cardiology.

Among the various protective or risk factors which characterize HF, wine does not seem to play either a beneficial nor a dangerous role. Across the levels of exposure, wine seems more as descriptive variable which accompanies the more relevant hard determinants of health/risk: a critical clinical condition is a cause of nonexposure, or the expression of a multifactorial exposure to risks, including tobacco; low to moderate consumption could be part of a positive attitude to life consistent with the corresponding estimates of QoL.

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Disclosures

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CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE

The bulk of evidence for a protective effect of moderate wine consumption on incident cardiovascular events comes mainly from studies in the general population without cardiovascular disease, with only scarce data in chronic heart failure. We show for the first time in a large cohort of patients with chronic heart failure enrolled in a multicenter clinical trial in Italy (Gruppo Italiano per lo Studio della Sopravvivenza nell'Insufficienza Cardiaca-Heart Failure trial), that ≥ 2 daily glasses of wine (as assessed with a dietary questionnaire), are associated with a better perceived and objective health status, lower prevalence of depression, and less vascular inflammation. However, moderate wine intake does not translate into a more favorable clinical outcome in this population of elderly patients with a prevalent Mediterranean lifestyle. Alcohol consumption and its impact on health is, however, a complex issue largely influenced by nationality, ethnicity, age, and social and family status of patients forming study populations. It is, therefore, not clear whether wine consumption per se (or of some of its biologically active components), and not the characteristics of the people who decide to drink wine, accounts for the differences in health perception. Wine consumption could be a possible indicator of better attitude toward life, and not a behavior to be necessarily blamed/discouraged in patients with heart failure.

Regular Wine Consumption in Chronic Heart Failure: Impact on Outcomes, Quality of Life, and Circulating Biomarkers

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on behalf of the GISSI-HF Investigators

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