Red Wine Tied to Lower Colorectal Cancer Risk

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LAS VEGAS — Drinking red wine more than three times a week was associated with a 68% reduction in risk of significant colorectal neoplasia in a study of 1,625 people undergoing screening colonoscopy, New York researchers reported at the annual meeting of the American College of Gastroenterology.

Because such a reduction was not seen in white-wine drinkers, Dr. Joseph C. Anderson and his associates at the State University of New York at Stony Brook speculated that the high resveratrol content of red wine might explain the finding.

A multivariate analysis that controlled for smoking, age, and other potentially confounding factors explored differences in significant colorectal neoplasia (villous tissue, high-grade dysplasia, large tubular adenomas, or more than two adenomas of any size) in 68 regular white-wine drinkers, 176 regular red-wine drinkers, and 1,381 abstainers (or infrequent wine drinkers).

Significant neoplasia was found in 9.9% of the abstainer/low wine consumption group, 8.8% of regular white-wine drinkers, and 3.4% of regular red-wine drinkers, for a 68% reduction in risk among those who regularly drank red wine.

In a second study of 2,536 patients, the researchers found evidence of neoplasia in 17.4% of men who currently smoked, 8.5% of those who had never smoked, and 9.2% of low-exposure or historical smokers. Neoplasia was seen in 11.5% of women who currently smoked, 8.2% of those who had never smoked, and 6.4% of those who had a low or historical exposure to cigarettes.

Among current smokers, the odds ratio for having significant colorectal neoplasia was similar in men (1.92) and women (2.13).

Smoking may deserve consideration as a notable risk factor in screening guidelines, Dr. Anderson said. ■