

Contact: Beth Bukata
703-839-7332
bethb@astro.org
Nicole Napoli
703-839-7336
nicolen@astro.org

Wine may provide radioprotective effect for breast cancer patients

Fairfax, Va., August 13, 2009 – Drinking wine while undergoing radiation treatment for breast carcinoma may reduce the incidence of skin toxicity in breast cancer patients, according to a study in the August issue of the *International Journal of Radiation Oncology*Biophysics*Physics*, the official journal of the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO).

Preventing radiation therapy-induced side effects is an important part of a patient's cancer treatment management. Several medications are available to help protect healthy organs from the effects of radiation, but they are often expensive, have side effects themselves and can provide protection to tumor cells as well as healthy cells.

Researchers at the Department of Oncology and the Center for High Technology Research and Education in Biomedical Sciences at Catholic University in Campobasso, Italy, the Catholic University Department of Radiotherapy in Rome, Italy, and at the National Research Council's BioMatLab in Rome, Italy, conducted this study to determine if the natural antioxidants in wine would provide a radioprotective effect in preventing acute skin toxicity in patients undergoing radiation therapy after conservative surgery for breast carcinoma.

The study consisted of 348 patients divided into three groups based on the dose/fractionation scheme used. Patients consuming wine had a lower incidence of Grade 2 or higher acute toxicity than those who did not consume alcohol. Patients who drank one glass of wine per day had a 13.6 percent incidence of skin toxicity versus a 38.4 percent incidence in patients who did not drink wine.

“If wine can prevent radiotherapy-induced toxicity without affecting antitumor efficacy, as we observed, it also has the potential to enhance the therapeutic benefit in cancer patients without increasing their risk of serious adverse effects,” Vincenzo Valentini, M.D., a radiation oncologist at Catholic University in Rome, Italy, one of the study authors, said. “The possibility that particular dietary practices or interventions can reduce radiation-induced toxicity is very intriguing.”

The American Society for Radiation Oncology
8280 Willow Oaks Corporate Drive • Suite 500 • Fairfax • VA • 22031
phone 703-502-1550 • fax 703-502-7852 • Web www.astro.org

ASTRO is the largest radiation oncology society in the world, with more than 10,000 members who specialize in treating patients with radiation therapies. As the leading organization in radiation oncology, biology and physics, the Society is dedicated to improving patient care through education, clinical practice, advancement of science and advocacy. For more information on radiation therapy, visit www.rtanswers.org. To learn more about ASTRO, visit www.astro.org.

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