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## New clue to red wine's heart-protecting effect

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NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Scientists in the UK have identified "oligomeric procyanidins" as the likely ingredient in red wine's polyphenols that contributes to heart health and longevity. And some red wines contain more procyanidins than others.

In the journal *Nature*, Dr. Roger Corder, from Queen Mary's School of Medicine and Dentistry in London, and his associates note that not everyone agrees that red wine actually possess heart-healthy properties, which they say may be due to the complexity and variability in the constituents in different wines.

To look into this issue, the investigators cultured human blood vessel cells and exposed them to 165 different wines to identify the polyphenols with most potent effects on blood vessels.

They found that procyanidins suppress production of a protein called endothelin-1 that constricts blood vessels. High-performance liquid chromatography identified oligomeric procyanidins as the specific phenolic constituent responsible for this effect.

People living in Nuoro province, Sardinia, and southwest France have higher than normal average longevity. And wines from those regions, Corder and colleagues found, had a 2- to 4-fold higher inhibitory effect on endothelin-1 and significantly higher oligomeric procyanidin levels than wines from Australia, Europe, South America, the US, and Sardinia.

Corder and his associates maintain that traditional wine-making methods and use of the flavonoid-rich grape Tannat commonly grown in southwest France result in high levels of oligomeric procyanidins in the local wine.

The researchers are hopeful that further investigation of oligomeric procyanidins-rich wines and foods will provide insight into how blood vessel function might be optimally maintained.

SOURCE: *Nature*, November 30, 2006.

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