Days of Wine and Doses

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A toast to your health! But red wine only, please. That's because it, along with grape skins and parts of certain other plants, contains **resveratrol**, a compound previously reported to have anticancer, anti-inflammatory and anti-atherosclerotic (artery changes that can lead to heart disease) effects. Now Alonzo Heredia, PhD, of Baltimore's Institute of Human Virology, reports that resveratrol not only blocks cellular enzymes used by HIV to reproduce, but also boosts production of other enzymes needed to activate certain nukes, possibly allowing for lower, less toxic doses.

In the test tube, resveratrol greatly enhanced the antiviral effects of both ddI and (to a lesser extent) AZT. Both combos almost completely stopped HIV's reproduction in both active and resting white blood cells—especially good news given that the latter are major viral reservoirs untouched by current drugs. And the heavily pretreated will be interested to know that resveratrol also made nukes effective again against drug-resistant viral strains. And when the resveratrol/nuke combos were removed from cell cultures, there was no virus rebound even after two weeks—a hopeful sign for less-than-daily therapy.

One thing the discovery-busy Heredia has yet to figure out is exactly what dose might work in people. The worry is that the dose that produces anti-HIV effects might be toxic. Phase I trials are beginning, so wait for those results before raiding your local vineyard or rushing to the health food store.

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