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Cover: Stereotypes serve a valuable purpose as guidelines of what to expect from members of different cultures and social groups, according to controversial psychological studies. Initial findings grant considerably more accuracy to stereotypes than much prior research has. (Cover art: Laurie Painter, Utopia Publishing Group)



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Letters

Medicinal wine

In your article on wine reducing the risk of heart attack ("Have Danes solved the French paradox?" SN: 3/30/96, p. 197), I didn't see any mention that stress reduction might play a part. People have been using alcohol for relaxation for millennia; has anyone considered this mechanism for the protective effect? Would any mild sedative work as well?

With respect to Nestle's assertions about the "social impact" of alcohol, this seems to me an unreasonable confusion of any alcohol consumption with alcohol abuse. I enjoy a glass of wine with meals, and I strongly resent the implication that this automatically causes me to beat my wife or shoot people.

A drug that reduces the chance of heart attack by up to 75 percent in the highest-risk group would be heralded as a medical miracle in any other context. That it should be cheap, widely available, and not require

approval by the FDA bureaucracy is miraculous indeed. Of course, I do foresee some difficulties in getting my health insurance to pay for my cellar....

*Richard B. Mott
Ringoes, N.J.*

I started to agree reluctantly with Ellison, the researcher who is recommending that people at high risk of heart disease have a glass of wine with dinner. The alternative—exercise, better diet, and not smoking—might be more healthful and socially responsible, but one of the predictors of successful therapy is patient compliance.

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All letters subject to editing.

Before we all jump on the bandwagon, however, did researcher Hein happen to look at the incidence of alcohol-related disease, wife beating, and other violence among the drinkers? Maybe he should.

*Phyllis Mervine
Ukiah, Calif.*

Where there's hope, there's life

"Hopelessness tied to heart, cancer deaths" (SN: 4/13/96, p. 230) seems to be an example of the science of medicine discovering something that practitioners of the art of medicine have known for generations. My father, who died in 1962, was a family practitioner (M.D.) in Chicago. I can distinctly recall his telling me that, if a patient was determined to live, death from even the most life-threatening illness might be delayed for an unpredictable length of time.

*Philip C. Freund
Lee, Mass.*