Faulty gene may be link between heart failure and alcohol use

Scientists have discovered a new link between alcohol, genes and heart health. They found a faulty gene may interact with alcohol to accelerate heart failure in some patients with the gene – even if they only drink moderate amounts of alcohol.

Their research looked at faulty versions of a gene called titin, which are carried by one in 100 people or 600,000 people in the UK. Titin is crucial for maintaining the elasticity of the heart muscle, and faulty versions are linked to a type of heart failure called dilated cardiomyopathy.

The team, made up of scientists from Imperial College London, Royal Brompton Hospital and MRC London Institute of Medical Sciences, analysed 141 patients with a type of heart failure called alcoholic cardiomyopathy (ACM).

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They found 13.5% of the patients they analysed were found to carry the mutation – much higher than the proportion of people who carry it in the general population.

They said the results suggest the condition is not simply the result of alcohol poisoning, but arises from a genetic predisposition – and that other family members may be at risk too.

Study author Dr James Ware, from the National Heart and Lung Institute at Imperial College London, said: "Our research strongly suggests alcohol and genetics are interacting – and genetic predisposition and alcohol consumption can act together to lead to heart failure.

Editor's note: Read the full study

Read full, original post: New link found between alcohol, genes and heart failure