Reviewer’s report

Title: The importance of iron in long-term survival of maintenance hemodialysis patients treated with epoetin-alpha and intravenous iron: analysis of 9.5 years of prospectively collected data

Version: 2 Date: 26 November 2008

Reviewer: Francesco Locatelli

Reviewer’s report:

The review “The importance of iron in long-term survival of maintenance hemodialysis patients treated with epoetin-alpha and intravenous iron: analysis of 9.5 years of prospectively collected data” by V. E. Pollak et Al. is well written. However the Authors should better explain the conclusions on the light of the recommendations of the K/DOQI Guidelines:

- Hb concentration: it is known that lower Hb concentrations are associated with higher morbidity and mortality: each 1g/dl greater Hb concentration is associated with reduction of relative risk of mortality of 4%, but there is not significant difference for patients with Hb concentration of 12 g/dl or greater compared with an Hb concentration of 11 to 11.9 g/dl (reference group). The Authors should better discuss the data respect the benefits for Hb > 11g/dl and for Hb > 12 g/dl.

The Authors should analyse the benefits and risks for special populations: diabetic patients, patients with heart diseases, ipossiemic patients.

- Iron therapy: it is known that a greater TSAT and Ferritin levels are positively associated with better anemia control minimizing the dose of ESA needed to achieve the range Hb levels.

The Authors should illustrate the benefits and the risks for TSAT and Ferritin beyond the targets recommended in the K/DOQI.

- About ESA dose: the Authors didn’t discuss at all the recent paper by Streja et Al. describing that higher platelet count is associated with lower iron stores and greater prescribed rHuEPO (AJKD 2008 Oct; 52 (4): 727-36).

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'