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

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Reviewer: Michal Mysliwiec

Reviewer's report:

I acknowledge that quality of life was not studied. Still, my question concerning possible influence of heart failure on mortality has been barely answered. Instead, the Authors have included a passage that reads: “it is interesting to note that of patients with Hb < 120 g/L 591/1314 (45%) died, whereas of those with Hb >120 g/L only 107/432 (24.7%) died. Systematic observations in LVH and LVMI were not made”. This is not completely true as diagnostic ultrasound of heart and ECG have been included in their computerized data (ref. 16). I understand that this data are going to be published in a separate paper. However, lack of mentioning in the discussion section of heart failure, which is one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in HD patients is a drawback of this otherwise very important paper.

I would accept publication of this paper hoping that in a short time the Authors will address the issue of heart failure in respect to mortality and hemoglobin/iron indices in their next paper.

I completely agree with the Authors on the possible importance of cytokines in the genesis of the outcome of the HD patients, but no single cytokine was studied in that particular paper, and I suggested to discuss clinical state (including heart failure) more thoroughly.

I share the opinion of the Authors on the necessity of a revision of the present guidelines on targets of hemoglobin and indices of iron state in HD patients.

In conclusion, I suggest publishing this very important paper after addressing the problem of heart failure in the discussion section.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests