Reviewer's report

Title: Prohepcidin, inflammation and iron parameters in hemodialysis patients with chronic hepatitis C

Version: 1 Date: 25 January 2012

Reviewer: Antonio Lupo

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The paper “Prohepcidin, inflammation and iron parameters in hemodialysis patients with chronic hepatitis C”, written by Yasar Caliskan et al. reports data demonstrating that HCV positive hemodialysis (HD) patients have low levels of serum pro-hepcidin and inflammation which might account for iron accumulation and lower iron/ESA requirement in HD patients. Their results, confirming those obtained in different study populations, might be a good starting point for the comprehension of the biological mechanism involved in the pathogenesis of anemia and in the response to treatment with erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESA) in HD patients with HCV infection.

While this study is certainly of interest, I have some concerns:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. I think that authors should include clinical data regarding HCV, such as: liver biopsy histological characteristics, HCV patients’ genotype, previous interferon therapies… and they should exclude important clinical HCV related biases.

2. In order to better understand the pro-hepcidin biological activity in these patients could be interesting to take a look, in a subset of patients, to macrophage or liver ferroportin levels and to measure the degree of correlation between pro-hepcidin and ferroportin.

3. The described close relationship between inflammation level and lower iron requirement in HCV positive HD patients is not really clear (See conclusion “HCV positive HD patients have low levels….. inflammation which might account for iron accumulation/or lower iron and ESA requirement in these patients”). Please explain better. Is it just a matter of IL-6? As shown in Table 4, there is no difference in hs-CRP and TNF-alpha levels between HCV pos and HCV neg patients.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Discussion need to be more detailed. Perhaps some considerations about the study could be included in it (e.g., the weaknesses and potential biases of the study, the selection of included patients etc).

2. The title seems not really focused.
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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

Declaration of competing interests:

No financial or personal competing interests