Reviewer's report

Title: Long-term prognosis of clinically early IgA nephropathy is not always favorable

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Reviewer: Krzysztof Kiryluk

Reviewer's report:

This is a retrospective study of kidney disease progression involving a small cohort of patients with mild forms of IgA nephropathy. The major strength of the study is a relatively long follow-up time, providing an opportunity to examine a natural course of the disease in this interesting subgroup of patients. The limitations include limited cohort size and retrospective nature of follow-up data. The manuscript is presented clearly and the conclusions are soundly based on the presented results. I have only minor suggestions for the authors:

1. The main limitation is the sample size, especially that a small number of primary outcome events can be expected in this lower risk subgroup of patients, and this precludes a development of a robust multivariate predictive model. The study power should be addressed in the limitations section of the discussion. The authors may want to point out that many other predictors of poor outcome may exist, but the study is underpowered to demonstrate their contributions.

2. Considering unequal retrospective follow-up time, Cox proportional hazards model may be preferred over simple logistic regression model in the analysis of ESRD and related renal outcomes. Are the main findings robust to the survival type modeling strategy?

3. The finding that hypoalbuminemia is predictive of ESRD is extremely interesting and deserves more emphasis in the discussion. Other studies found that low albumin levels are independently predictive of ESRD in IgAN (for example, please see Xie et al. PLoS One. 2012;7(6):e38904). It would be important to comprehensively summarize the existing evidence supporting serum albumin as an important predictor of progression.

4. It may be important to mention that the MDRD eGFR formula may not be accurate in Koreans.

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:

None