Reviewer's report

Title: r.hu-Erythropoietin (EPO) treatment of pre-ESRD patients slows the rate of progression of renal decline

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Reviewer: Paul Jungers

Level of interest: A paper of limited interest

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

General comment
The study presented by Tapolyai et al, although non controlled and involving only a limited number of subjects, affords some confirmative information as to the potential benefits of epoetin therapy in predialysis patients in terms of safety and of slowing the rate of progression. While the results of large randomised studies currently in progress are awaited, this study has the interest of stimulating research on the effects of anemia correction on the rate of progression of chronic renal failure.

Specific comments

Patients and methods.
This study is not actually a "case-control" study and this formulation should be modified.
Authors should better describe their patients: What was their age, gender and body weight?
What was the distribution of primary renal diseases, especially the number of patients with diabetic nephropathy and vascular disease?
Initial hematocrit was not 30 mg% but 30% (abstract and text)
Serum bicarbonate level cannot be 22 mg%

Results
The average value of maintenance dose of epoetin should be given in Units/kg of body weight/week.

In addition to the 1/creat. Expression, the authors should give the value of estimated creatinine clearance (according to the classic Cockcroft-Gault formula) 1 year before To, at To, and 1 year after To, and the value of the rate of decline in Ccr (expressed in ml/min/year) for both periods.
The figure is inadequate. It would be better to represent the individual lines corresponding to the various patients, or only the average curves.

Competing interests:
None declared.