Reviewer's report

Title: Optimal and continuous anaemia control in a cohort of dialysis patients in Switzerland

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Reviewer: Ken Farrington

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1. More information is required on selection criteria. In each participating centre did recruitment encompass all patients who satisfied inclusion and exclusion criteria? If this was so, this should explicitly stated in the methods section. If this was not so then the value of the study is undermined by selection bias. Were patients in the study centres on other erythropoiesis stimulating agents (ESA) apart from epoietin beta? If so why were they not included in the study? What were the criteria for selecting which ESA patients were prescribed?

2. No account has been taken of the effect of many other parameters on anaemia management including dialysis vintage, residual renal function, dialysis access, dialysis modality, membrane biocompatibility and flux, adequacy parameters, inflammatory markers, serum PTH, intercurrent illnesses and hospitalisations. All of these factors modulate haemoglobin level and EPO requirement, and the examination of such factors was one of the stated aims of the study. Much of this data is routinely monitored. I am surprised no information has been included with respect to these parameters at least at baseline and that the effect on anaemia management of at least some of them, such as dialysis vintage, has not been examined.

3. I have some doubts about the statistical analysis. Firstly I am dubious about the practice of analysing combined data from patients on peritoneal dialysis and haemodialysis/haemodiafiltration, and from those receiving EPO by the intravenous and subcutaneous routes. Asymmetrical distribution of these characteristics across comparator groups eg gender, diabetics v non-diabetics would distort comparisons of EPO dose. Secondly it seems that most of the analyses are based on mean levels of haemoglobin, EPO and other parameters over a 12 month period. I am not sure this makes the most of a rich data set.