Reviewer's report

Title: Transdermal fentanyl for the treatment of pain caused by osteoarthritis of the knee or hip, an open, multicentre study

Version: 1 Date: 20 December 2004

Reviewer: serge Perrot

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an open study, thus the results have a low level of evidence. Statistical assessment have compared patients at baseline and at the end of the study, but the drop out rate is around 31%.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
Why all the patients enrolled did not reach higher level of weak opioids, eg maximum available dosage, before taking fentanyl? As this is an open study, it should have been performed as it is done in the real world, we do not know what is the rational to switch to fentanyl from low doses of weak opioids? What is the benefit of this change, except the 25% drop out patients?
In this open study, it would have been interesting to compare the doses of weak opioid and fentanyl. We do not know if the use of metoclopramide is of benefit for the patients under fentanyl. Rescue medication was authorized and taken by 59% of patients, thus we do not know if the better pain control at the end of the study is related to the fentanyl treatment or to the global pain management;

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Reject because scientifically unsound

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:
I am taking part of the advisory board on transdermal fentanyl and on transmucosal fentanyl, thus I have receive fees from J&J that sponsored this study.