Reviewer's report

Title: Renal itch in hemodialysis patients

Version: 1 Date: 14 December 2004

Reviewer: Geoffrey Boner

Reviewer's report:

General
As I have stated above the manuscript is descriptive in nature and adds nothing new present information.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
1. I do not feel that the title is appropriate. The authors have called the condition "renal itch". The condition is not renal but due to renal failure. The title could easily be changed to "Pruritus in Hemodialysis Patients".
2. The Material and Methods Section needs to be expanded as follows:
   a. The patient description should include age described as mean with range or refer to table 1.
   b. The authors have given the primary disease of 35 of the 167 patients. What was the cause of renal failure in the remaining patients.
   c. There must be a better description of dialysis methods. What dialyzers were used and what was the method of sterilization? What was the adequacy of dialysis (Kt/V)? What dialysate composition, mainly acetate or bicarbonate? The patients were being treated 1-3 times per week and in table 1 it states that the patients are being treated a mean of 2.6 times weekly. I would suggest that it would be preferable to state the number of hours of dialysis per week. I have put a lot of emphasis on the question of dialysis as it would be important to know whether the patients are underdialyzed or not.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. Mild pruritus was defined as being episodic. In the results section the authors state that 36 patients had mild pruritus, but a two sentences later state that 42 had episodic pruritus. Please change or explain the difference.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.