Reviewer's report

Title: Evidence for the use of Levomepromazine for symptom control in the palliative care setting: a systematic review.

Version: 2 Date: 20 November 2012

Reviewer: Paul Howard

Reviewer's report:

The authors have conducted a systematic review and correctly point out that this drug's widespread use is based on open label data and case series.

To the best of my knowledge, the content is accurate and all relevant papers have been included.

I did think the text might not flow as smoothly as it could in some places.

Three examples:

1. In the concluding paragraph in the abstract, the authors correctly point out that evidence is limited before then stating that the drug has a number of beneficial effects. Arguably, no-one actually 'knows' if it works or not - people just 'believe' it to work. The following re-wording might make it flow more easily: "levomepromazine is widely used in palliative care for [list the indications]. However, the supporting evidence is limited to open series and case reports. Thus controlled trials are required to...."

2. In the final conclusion: "We emphasize, that we believe the amount of publications, which are at least mentioning levomepromazine, underlines, that there seems to be a clinical use and value for this drug's use in symptom treatment in palliative care patients and this deserves further evaluation". The following re-wording might again make it flow more easily: "Beneficial effects of levomepromazine are widely reported in the palliative care setting; it's role in symptom control therefore deserves further evaluation"

3. The authors already provide a helpful table of references giving an outline of the methods and findings of the papers. Expanding this a little might allow quite a lot of the text to be removed from the paragraphs. For example, the block of text describing the methods for, say, nausea, could be replaced by "beneficial effects of levomepromazine are described for nausea and vomiting in several open label series and reports (see table x); however this has not been confirmed in controlled trials", thus allowing the paper to be shorter and "punchier" without loosing any of the content.

This isn't an exhaustive list - there are a number of other places where the text might benefit from some re-ordering and re-structuring.

Consider clarifying "alfa1" (in the section on it's mode of action) as "alpha-1 adrenoceptor"
Despite the above comments, this is a relevant systematic review about a widely used drug and I would very much encourage the authors to pursue it to submission.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

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

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I am editor for the levomepromazine section of the Palliative Care Formulary