Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Opioid switch from low dose of oral oxycodone to transdermal fentanyl matrix patch for patients with stable thoracic malignancy-related pain.

**Version:** 3  **Date:** 4 June 2014

**Reviewer:** Stefan Wirz

**Reviewer’s report:**

The question is well posed.
Methods are appropriate and well described. Data is sound.
The manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition.

In the discussion, some important articles on transdermal fentanyl are left out and should be discussed aiming adverse effects. It is not proven, whether the transdermal route of administration itself is associated with less side effects. Furthermore, citation 9 seems to be misinterpreted: the drop-out rate with Fenatnlyl was higher than with Morphine! Just constipation seemed to be less frequent under Fentanyl, whereas the assessment methods of constipation remained unclear. This must be mentioned in the manuscript. The conclusions of the paper of Caraceni must be evaluated very carefully: There are many drawbacks in this manuscript, such as the statement of less adverse effects under transdermal opioids (again!). The methodical problems of the study of Radbruch must be mentioned: open-labeled, biased study, no assessment of constipation. Instead of that the amount of laxatives - given by nurses - was assessed! This should be pointed out.

Some important publications with a clear methodology should be mentioned: Please, refer to the studies of Wirz and Tassinari:

Transdermal fentanyl as a front-line approach to moderate-severe pain: a meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials.

Transdermal opioids as front line treatment of moderate to severe cancer pain: a systemic review.

Gastrointestinal symptoms under opioid therapy: a prospective comparison of oral sustained-release hydromorphone, transdermal fentanyl, and transdermal buprenorphine.

Limitations of the work are clearly stated.
The authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building. Title and abstract accurately convey what has been found. Writing is acceptable.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

In the past 5 ys honoraria for lectures: Napp - Mundipharma China, Lilly, Grunenthal, Pfizer, Norgine