Reviewer’s report

Title: Probing Protein Energy Wasting in Haemodialysis Patients Using Appetite Assessment: A Cross-Sectional Study in the Malaysian Dialysis Setting

Version: 1

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Reviewer: Casper F M Franssen

Reviewer’s report:

The authors prospectively studied the relationship between appetite (scored on a 5-item Likert scale) and various nutritional markers and protein-energy-wasting (PEW) scores in 205 patients on maintenance hemodialysis for >6 months. The study group is characterized by a relative low age (mean 52 years) and a relatively long dialysis vintage (mean 7.9 years). The authors found a significant relation between appetite and various nutritional markers but no significant relationship between appetite category and PEW.

Major compulsory comments:

1. The authors conclude that there is no significant relationship between appetite category and PEW. However, when I see Figure 2 and read the text at the top of page 14 there is a graded increase in the proportion of patients with PEW with decreasing appetite. The p-value is not provided in the text or in the legend of Figure 2 (or I have missed it). Please provide the p-value (and the test used to assess the p-value). Even if this is not significant, this might be because there are too few patients in the ‘poor’ and in the ‘very good’ appetite category. So, I would be cautious with the conclusion that there is no relation between appetite and PEW, especially since appetite was strongly associated with various nutritional parameters.

2. Patient inclusion: in the methods section it is stated “terminally ill patients were excluded”. But what about patients with intercurrent illness (e.g. pneumonia, diverticulitis or central venous access related bacteremia) just before or during the study? Were these patients excluded? Was hospitalization an exclusion criterion? There were 6 patients with poor appetite. I would suggest to give more information on these patients.

3. Page 11: How was lean tissue mass and fat mass measured/calculated?

4. Page 15: in lines 350-351 it is stated that hsCRP is not correlated with appetite scores. In contrast, at line 357 it is stated “…patients reporting lower appetite scores had significantly increased hsCRP”. Please change one of the two statements.

Minor comments:

1. The English could be improved.

2. What is meant with ‘Probing’, e.g. in the title of the manuscript. I would suggest changing the manuscript title.
3. Figure 3 and 4: please specify what the vertical line represents.

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.