Reviewer's report

Title: Chronic kidney disease in sugarcane workers in Cameroon: A cross-sectional study

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Reviewer: David J. Friedman

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript by Martin et al. is among the first, if not the first, report of kidney disease prevalence in African sugarcane workers. They found that the incidence of CKD was quite low, in contrast to numerous studies from Central America that report very high rates of CKD in sugarcane workers. I think the report is important, interesting, and generally well done, though I don't entirely agree with their conclusions and I think they should at least entertain the possibility of alternatives.

Though background rates of CKD in Cameroon are not well established, the rate in Martin's study is likely at or below that rate. The authors should be commended for going to the effort of obtaining follow-up data on those who had abnormal results (either high creatinine or dipstick positive proteinuria) on the initial screen.

There are many differences between workers in Cameroon with low rates of CKD and workers in Central America with high rates of CKD. The authors suggest that work practice differences are the likely explanation for the discrepant rates. There is evidence to suggest work practice is one important variable. I would recommend that the authors give some consideration, at least in their discussion, to other potential variables. Examples include differences in local pathogens, genetic factors, metals from the Andes' volcanic soil, and others. With respect to work practices among sugarcane workers in Central America, I think the authors should balance the input from reference 20 (an internet reference which appears to be from an advocacy group) with some other data sources, if possible.

The report is not without minor flaws that will always be the case when doing field work under difficult conditions. The importance of the content, which appears generally sound, outweighs these deficiencies in my opinion.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
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Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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No

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I am able to assess the statistics

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