

theless, in our fully adjusted model, the 95% CI for the hazard ratio associated with the administration of paricalcitol versus calcitriol included the point estimate reported by Teng *et al.*<sup>3</sup> Paricalcitol appears to confer no survival advantage over doxercalciferol. The point estimates for hazard ratios for doxercalciferol versus paricalcitol ranged from 0.99 to 1.06 and each 95% CI included 1.0. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that doxercalciferol may be associated with a small benefit or disadvantage over paracalciferol.

Our retrospective study reflects clinical practice. Since different vitamin D preparations became available at different times, the treatments were not simultaneous, and switching was the major cause of censoring. The vitamin D analogs were not dosed according to KDOQI guidelines, since most of the study occurred before these were published.

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## Immunofluorescence on proteinase XXIV-digested paraffin sections

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**To the Editor:** In their comparison of immunofluorescence (IF) on frozen sections with pronase-digested paraffin sections, Nasr *et al.*<sup>1</sup> found that pronase digestion was a useful technique for IF on paraffin (IF-P) sections. However, the sensitivity of this technique was low for membranous glomerulopathy and anti-glomerular basement membrane disease (50 and 20%, respectively), which was mainly due to weak staining of IgG (immunoglobulin G).

In our laboratory, we use bacterial proteinase XXIV (Sigma, St Louis, MO, USA), as described by Bancroft and Gamble,<sup>2</sup> instead of pronase. We compared IF-P on proteinase XXIV- and pronase-digested paraffin sections. We selected five cases of lupus nephritis that showed full-house fluorescence staining on frozen sections. In all cases, staining intensity was similar or better on proteinase XXIV-digested slides, and less background was observed. Importantly, staining for IgG and C1q was more intense in sections digested with proteinase XXIV than in those digested with

pronase. In addition, we tested five cases of anti-glomerular basement membrane disease. One of these was negative after pronase, as well as after proteinase XXIV digestion, one was positive with both techniques, whereas the remaining three were positive only after proteinase XXIV digestion. Finally, in nine cases of membranous glomerulopathy, diagnostic IF-P staining for IgG was obtained in six cases after pronase digestion and in five cases after proteinase XXIV digestion.

In conclusion, we agree with Nasr *et al.* that IF-P is a valuable salvage technique for renal biopsies. To this, we would like to add that IF-P on sections digested with proteinase XXIV is generally more sensitive than IF-P on pronase-digested sections.

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## Machiavelli and urinalysis

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**To the Editor:** I read with great interest the article on the history of urinalysis in Western culture by Armstrong.<sup>1</sup> It gives a detailed outline of how uroscopy developed into a prominent medical diagnostic tool, and later was abandoned due to the poor scientific basis of such practice. In Dr Armstrong's article, however, it is not mentioned that uroscopy was so popular to be included in the most famous play by Niccolò Machiavelli, 'La Mandragola (The Mandrake)',<sup>2,3</sup> making fun of presumptuous physicians and credulous patients. In another important paper on uroscopy by Voswinckel,<sup>4</sup> the contribution of Machiavelli is not mentioned as well.

Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli (May 3, 1469 to June 21, 1527) was an Italian political philosopher. He is a central figure of the political component of the Italian Renaissance, most widely known for his treatises on realist political theory (*The Prince*). However, he also was a musician, poet, and romantic comedic playwright.

The Mandragola has been widely performed and very popular since the sixteenth century. The title comes from the popular tale that a woman who drinks a potion made from the mandrake root is certain to conceive a child, the only drawback being that the man with whom she first has sex after taking the potion will die within 8 days. The story evolves around Callimaco, a lovesick Florentine who came from Paris to conquer the heart (and the graces) of Lucrezia, the beautiful young wife of Messer Nicia Calfucci, a