

Differences between measured total nitrogen losses in spent peritoneal dialysate effluent and estimated nitrogen losses

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1 Differences between measured total nitrogen losses in spent peritoneal  
2 dialysate effluent and estimated nitrogen losses

3  
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5 Abstract

6

7 Objective

8 Kidney dialysis patients treated by peritoneal dialysis (PD) are at  
9 increased risk of muscle wasting and clinical guidelines recommend assessing  
10 dietary intake, by calculating protein equivalent of nitrogen appearance (PNA) to  
11 assure protein sufficiency. The PNA equations were developed many years ago,  
12 and we wished to re-evaluate them by comparing estimated and measured  
13 peritoneal nitrogen losses.

14 Design

15 Cross sectional observational cohort study

16 Setting

17 Outpatient peritoneal dialysis centre of a University Hospital

18 Subjects

19 67 peritoneal dialysis patients, 61.2% male, median age 67.3 (53.2-  
20 79.4) years

21 Intervention

22 Measurements of the nitrogen content of 24 hour spent peritoneal  
23 dialysate, by automated chemiluminescence analyser compared to estimates of  
24 nitrogen losses based on dialysate urea loss using the Bergström, Randerson and  
25 Blumenkrantz equations.

## 26 Results

27

28 Measured total dialysate nitrogen was more than urea nitrogen  
29 equivalent,  $5.79 \pm 4.07$  vs  $2.66 \pm 1.67$  g/day ( $p < 0.001$ ). Each equation has an  
30 inflation factor to compensate for non-urea protein losses, however measured  
31 nitrogen loss was 27.7 (15.5-59.6) vs Bergström 16.5 (9.8-27.1), Randerson 16.4  
32 (9.8-27.3) and Blumenkrantz 12.9 (7.9-25.4) g/day,  $p < 0.001$ . Bland Altman  
33 analysis demonstrated systematic bias with increasing under-estimation by  
34 these equations with increasing measured nitrogen losses ( $r = 0.74$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

35

## 36 Conclusion

37

38 Our findings demonstrate that at higher protein losses, the currently  
39 used predictive equations underestimate the amount lost. It is important to  
40 attempt to compensate iatrogenic protein loss by recommending the appropriate  
41 intake of dietary protein to patients, in an attempt to minimise muscle wasting.  
42 This discrepancy may have arisen because of the characteristics of newer PD  
43 prescriptions and change in patient demographics. We propose a new equation  
44  $\text{PNA g/day} = 0.31 \times (\text{urea loss mmol}) + 7.17$ , which will require prospective  
45 validation in additional studies.

46

47

## 48 Introduction

49

50 Patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD) are at increased risk of losing  
51 muscle mass. The reasons for this are many [1] and include episodes of  
52 metabolic acidosis during progression of CKD which switch on the proteasome

53 pathway of muscle protein breakdown, low protein diets which aim to slow CKD  
54 progression [2], bone and mineral disorders and background inflammation  
55 which, itself, promotes muscle loss [3]. In view of this, clinical guidelines  
56 recommend the regular assessment of dietary protein intake, with nutritional  
57 targets designed to reduce muscle breakdown and loss [4,5]. Assuming that a  
58 patient with CKD is not losing muscle mass if they are in neutral protein  
59 balance, then a useful laboratory measure of this is nitrogen balance, which is  
60 the difference between protein (i.e. nitrogen) intake and nitrogen losses. The  
61 protein equivalent of nitrogen appearance (PNA) has been traditionally  
62 estimated from combined urinary and peritoneal urea losses and it is assumed  
63 that urea represents a constant proportion of total nitrogen excreted [6]. In  
64 reality this is not always the case because nitrogen excretion switches  
65 between urea and ammonia, depending on fluctuating acid-base balance [7].  
66 Thus, a relative increase in the proportion of nitrogen excreted as ammonia  
67 may be undetected, and urea excretion will yield an underestimate of nitrogen  
68 excretion. This would represent a false positive nitrogen balance which may  
69 mask concomitant muscle protein loss.

70 Despite this, three equations are currently used in clinical practice, all derived  
71 from small studies in peritoneal dialysis (PD) patients treated by continuous  
72 ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD) [8-10], with the largest study based on  
73 23 measurements from 12 patients [8]. In those studies, the equations were  
74 derived from correlation of urea excretion and of total nitrogen excretion  
75 measured by the Kjeldahl method. This technique may not account for all

76 forms of nitrogen resistant to acid conversion to ammonia. In contrast,  
77 automated chemiluminescence analysis is superior because all forms of  
78 nitrogen are converted to nitric oxide, during pyrolysis at 1100°C [11]. An  
79 added advantage is that liquid samples require only simple dilution and can be  
80 analysed in duplicate within 4 minutes.

81 As patient demographics and PD prescriptions have changed over time we  
82 wished to determine whether there were differences in determining PNA using  
83 these equations, by measuring the excretion of nitrogen in urine and peritoneal  
84 dialysate effluent in the form of either urea or total nitrogen. In effect we  
85 have repeated the original studies [6,8,9] but with patients undergoing modern  
86 renal therapies.

87

## 88 Methods

89 We measured urea in twenty-four hour collections of spent dialysate  
90 effluent [1,2], using a standard laboratory analyser (P module analyzer, Roche  
91 Integra, Roche diagnostics, Lewes, UK [12]), and total nitrogen by  
92 chemiluminescence. In brief samples are pyrolysed at 1100°C in a mixture of  
93 oxygen and argon to quantitatively convert all nitrogen compounds to nitric  
94 oxide, and then reacted with ozone. Reaction with ozone yields nitrogen dioxide  
95 in which an electron relaxes to ground state emitting a photon. This  
96 chemiluminescence is measured by a photomultiplier tube [11,13]. Peritoneal  
97 dialysate protein was measured using pyrogallol red-molybdate (PRM) (Hitachi  
98 726 auto analyser, Maidenhead UK). This method is linear up to 2.14 g/L, and

99 higher concentration samples were diluted to bring them into range [12]. C-  
100 reactive protein (CRP) was measured using the same assay as the UK National  
101 Amyloid centre, with values reported down to < 1 mg/L, and haemoglobin was  
102 measured by an automated counter (Sysmex XN900, Sysmex Corporation, Kobe,  
103 Japan) [14]. Patients used standard lactate containing glucose dialysates (Baxter  
104 Health Care, Deerfield, Illinois, USA). In addition to 13.6 g/dL dextrose, 31  
105 (59.6%) used 22.7 g/dL dextrose, median 4.0 (0-7.75) L/day, and 42 (80.8%)  
106 used 1.5 (0.6-2.0) L/day 7.5% icodextrin. Body composition was measured by  
107 multifrequency bioelectrical impedance (MFBIA) (InBody 720, Seoul, South  
108 Korea) [15]. Patients had not had peritonitis or other infections, or hospital  
109 admissions within the previous 8 weeks. MFBIA [16] was measured in a  
110 previously reported standardised manner; first patients were asked to empty  
111 the bladder and then peritoneal dialysate was drained out, as ascites and  
112 peritoneal dialysate can potentially alter bioimpedance derived body composition  
113 measurements [17]. Patients with amputations, pregnancy, and those with limb  
114 paralysis were excluded. Patient demographics and ethnicity were obtained  
115 from the Hospital patient records.

116 PNA was calculated using the following equations [4,5];  
117 Bergström [6]  
118  $20.1 + 7.50 \text{ Urea Nitrogen Appearance g/24 hours}$   
119 Randerson [8],  
120  $15.7 + 7.47 \text{ Urea Nitrogen Appearance g/24 hours}$   
121 and Blumenkrantz [9]

122 34.6 + 5.86 Urea Nitrogen Appearance g/24 hours

123 Dialysate urea nitrogen was determined by adjusting for the nitrogen content of  
124 urea; 1 mole urea being equivalent to 28g nitrogen.

125

126 This project was registered with the UK Integrated Research Application  
127 System (IRAS) reference number 191812/893749/14/564 was approved by the  
128 National Research Ethics (Manchester) and the Hospital Research and  
129 Development Service and complied with NHS guidelines (UK NHS guidelines for  
130 clinical audit and service development). Individual consent was waived as only  
131 waste samples were analysed. In keeping with the Hospital Trust policy no  
132 patient identifiable data was used.

133

#### 134 Statistical analysis

135 Data is presented as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation, median (interquartile  
136 range), or percentage. Standard statistical tests; Wilcoxon rank sum pair test  
137 Anova, or Kruskal Wallis) with appropriate post hoc corrections made for  
138 multiple testing (Tukey or Dunn), where appropriate. Bland Altman analysis was  
139 used to determine agreement between methods. Statistical analysis used Prism  
140 7.0 (Graph Pad, San Diego, USA) and SPSS 24 (IBM, Armonk, New York, USA).  
141 Statistical significance was taken as  $p < 0.05$ .

142

#### 143 Results

144 We measured urea and total nitrogen in 67 PD outpatients attending for  
145 the assessment of peritoneal membrane function, and dialysis adequacy (Table  
146 1). The median number of peritoneal dialysate exchanges prescribed was 5.5  
147 (4.0-6.0)/day with a median peritoneal dwell volume of 2.0 (2.0-2.0) L. Total  
148 nitrogen (measured by chemiluminescence) was greater than that for the urea  
149 nitrogen equivalent,  $5.79 \pm 4.07$  vs  $2.66 \pm 1.67$  g/day although there was a strong  
150 linear relationship between the two (Figure 1). The difference represents the  
151 non-urea nitrogen losses (e.g. ammonia, protein), which are approximately 55% of  
152 total nitrogen loss.

153 Each of the three equations converts urea nitrogen in spent dialysate  
154 effluent to total nitrogen on the basis of the regression equation derived from  
155 previous studies [6,8,9]. In each equation, the intercept and slope of the  
156 relationship between urea nitrogen and total nitrogen (which includes other  
157 nitrogen losses in the dialysate - an "inflation factor") differed. We then  
158 compared total nitrogen lost in the spent dialysates and the urea nitrogen  
159 equivalent adjusted by the individual inflation factor. For all three equations  
160 there was a positive correlation with total nitrogen losses,  $r=0.74$ ,  $p<0.001$ .  
161 Bland-Altman analysis revealed a systematic bias for estimated total nitrogen  
162 when compared to measured total peritoneal nitrogen losses. At lower urea  
163 losses, total nitrogen loss was overestimated, whilst at higher peritoneal urea  
164 losses, total nitrogen loss was underestimated (Figures 2-4). The difference  
165 between measured total nitrogen and that estimated by each of the three  
166 equations differed significantly (Bergström -12.5 (-30.8 -4.1), Randerson -12.5 (-



167 30.8 -), Blumenkrantz - 16.2 (-36.6 -6.5),  $p < 0.001$ ). There was no correlation  
168 between this difference in peritoneal nitrogen loss and either serum urea  
169 ( $r = 0.11$ ,  $p = 0.41$ ), or total protein ( $r = 0.06$ ,  $p = 0.66$ ), but the difference between  
170 measured nitrogen losses and estimated losses increased with increasing total  
171 peritoneal dialysate protein loss ( $r = 0.37$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ), total drained dialysate  
172 volume ( $r = 0.34$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ), and greater muscle mass ( $r = 0.28$ ,  $p = 0.026$ ), but not  
173 body weight ( $r = 0.13$ ,  $p = 0.29$ ) or body fat mass ( $r = 0.14$ ,  $p = 0.28$ ).

174 Using our own data then the regression equation between PNA and daily  
175 peritoneal urea losses was  $\text{PNA g/day} = 0.31 (\text{urea loss mmol}) + 7.17$ . On Bland  
176 Altman analysis, this equation did not have the systematic bias of under  
177 estimating protein losses when patients had higher losses (Figure 5).

178

## 179 Discussion

180 Current clinical guideline recommend that PD patients should increase  
181 their dietary protein intake compared to those with chronic kidney disease to  
182 compensate for peritoneal protein losses [4,5]. These patients are potentially at  
183 increased risk of muscle wasting [1,2], and muscle wasting is an established risk  
184 factor for increased mortality [18]. Dietary protein intake is an important  
185 factor in maintaining muscle mass in the face of inflammation and other factors  
186 which stimulate net muscle protein breakdown. This is because amino acids  
187 released from skeletal muscle are either incorporated into acute phase proteins  
188 synthesised in the liver or oxidised for energy production with excretion of the  
189 amino group as urea or ammonia. In this situation, even though net muscle

190 protein breakdown is increased, the hope is that an adequate protein intake will  
191 provide substrate for muscle protein synthesis. Whereas the body has fat  
192 stores which can act as an energy store, the body holds no such equivalent store  
193 of protein which can provide amino acids and as such dietary protein intake is  
194 essential to prevent muscle loss.

195 Clinical guidelines recommend that PD patients should be assessed for dietary  
196 protein intake [4,5], and although dietary records and patient recall can be used,  
197 most dialysis centres use protein nitrogen accumulation (PNA) in clinical  
198 practice. PNA can be estimated by a number of equations [4-6], based on urea  
199 losses in spent peritoneal dialysate and urine, with an inflation factor to account  
200 for losses of proteins, small peptides and amino acids, and then a correction  
201 factor for other protein losses, including those from the gastrointestinal tract,  
202 and loss of skin, estimated to average around 1.3 g/day, although faecal losses  
203 may vary between 0.52-2.8g/day [6,8,10].

204 As discussed, the studies on which the equations for calculating PNA are  
205 based come from a limited number of small studies of patients treated by  
206 continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD) [8,9,10]. Previous reports have  
207 shown that there are differences between the three most commonly used  
208 equations, and there is no universal consensus as to whether any one of these  
209 equations has superiority [6]. We found that all three equations under-  
210 estimated measured nitrogen losses with increasing losses, with the difference  
211 increasing from  $4.4 \pm 8.5$  to those with a PNA < 40 g/day to  $33.9 \pm 13.3$  g/day for  
212 those with a PNA > 40 g/day. This difference was greater with increasing volume

213 of drained peritoneal dialysate. We propose some explanations for this  
214 discrepancy. Whereas the equations used to estimate PNA were derived from  
215 studies using CAPD patients, who used between 6-8 litres of dialysate, the trend  
216 in Europe and North America now is to use automated peritoneal dialysis cyclers,  
217 using much higher volumes of dialysate, and in our study almost two thirds of  
218 patients were treated by APD cyclers. In addition, the difference between  
219 measured and estimated nitrogen losses was greater with increasing dialysate  
220 protein losses, and although these equations have an inflation factor to  
221 compensate for protein losses, this was based on lower dialysate volumes. Total  
222 nitrogen includes not only proteins and urea, but also small peptides, nucleotides,  
223 amino acids, organic acids, uric acid, nitrates and nitrites. However, even making  
224 allowance for some of these compounds (which will be increased in the present  
225 peritoneal dialysates) the Bergström, Randerson and Blumenkrantz equations  
226 under estimate nitrogen losses with increasing losses, and as such would under  
227 estimate nPNA. However, of more concern in patients with the lowest dialysate  
228 nitrogen losses, these equations over-estimated losses in a proportion of these  
229 patients. This group of patients would have the lowest PNA, and as such be at  
230 greater risk of muscle loss due to lower dietary protein intake. From the  
231 viewpoint of clinical risk, an overestimate of dietary intake in patients with the  
232 lowest PNA may prevent recognition of dietary protein inadequacy or delay a  
233 clinical decision to provide additional nutritional support.

234 **We re-evaluated the standard equations used to estimate dietary protein**  
235 **intake due to the increasing use of automated peritoneal dialysis in our own**

236 centre. Our study is based on a relatedly small heterogenous patient cohort. We  
237 need to prospectively evaluate our equation, as this may well have to be modified  
238 for age, gender, ethnicity, physical activity and dietary variations, for example  
239 vegans [19,20,21]. As previous reports have demonstrated that age, gender, and  
240 ethnicity all potentially have an effect on body composition, especially muscle  
241 mass. In addition, energy expenditure also has been shown to have an effect on  
242 body composition muscle mass [22,23].

243         The development of alternative methods to measure nitrogen losses in  
244 body fluids has allowed us to re-examine the estimation of PNA, using the three  
245 most commonly used equations, in peritoneal dialysis patients. These equations  
246 were based on a series of small studies in a generally younger cohort of patients  
247 treated by CAPD. Over the course of time there have been changes in patient  
248 demographics and PD prescriptions. By measuring total nitrogen, we have found  
249 that these equations developed more than 20 years ago may underestimate  
250 higher protein losses. We developed an equation from our data that does not  
251 have systematic bias, but this will need to be prospectively validated in separate  
252 patient cohorts, and it may be that different equations will be required for  
253 patients treated by continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis and those using  
254 cyclical PD prescriptions.

255

256 Practical application

257

258 When estimating dietary protein intake by calculating the nitrogen appearance  
259 rate in peritoneal dialysis patients using the Bergström, Randerson or

260 Blumenkrantz equations, then these patients under estimate protein nitrogen  
261 losses in patients with greater protein nitrogen losses, and so under estimate  
262 dietary protein intake.

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296 The authors have no conflict of interest

297 The data presented in this paper has not been previously published in part or  
298 full form

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399 Figure 1. Total nitrogen measured in 24 hour spent dialysate compared to urea  
400 nitrogen equivalent.

401

402 Figure 2. Bland Altman plot daily mean peritoneal nitrogen loss, and difference  
403 between measured total nitrogen and estimated peritoneal urea nitrogen  
404 equivalent losses using the Bergström equation [10]. Dotted line - mean bias,  
405 dashed and dotted line 95% limits of association.

406

407 Figure 3. Bland Altman plot daily mean peritoneal nitrogen loss, and difference  
408 between measured total nitrogen and estimated peritoneal urea nitrogen  
409 equivalent losses using the Randerson equation [8]. Dotted line - mean bias,  
410 dashed and dotted line 95% limits of association.

411

412 Figure 4. Bland Altman plot daily mean peritoneal nitrogen loss, and difference  
413 between measured total nitrogen and estimated peritoneal urea nitrogen  
414 equivalent losses using the Blumenkrantz equation [9]. Dotted line - mean bias,  
415 dashed and dotted line 95% limits of association.

416

417 Figure 5. Bland Altman plot daily mean peritoneal nitrogen loss, and difference  
418 between measured total nitrogen and estimated peritoneal urea nitrogen  
419 equivalent losses using data obtained from this study. Dotted line - mean bias,  
420 dashed and dotted line 95% limits of association.

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Figure 1  
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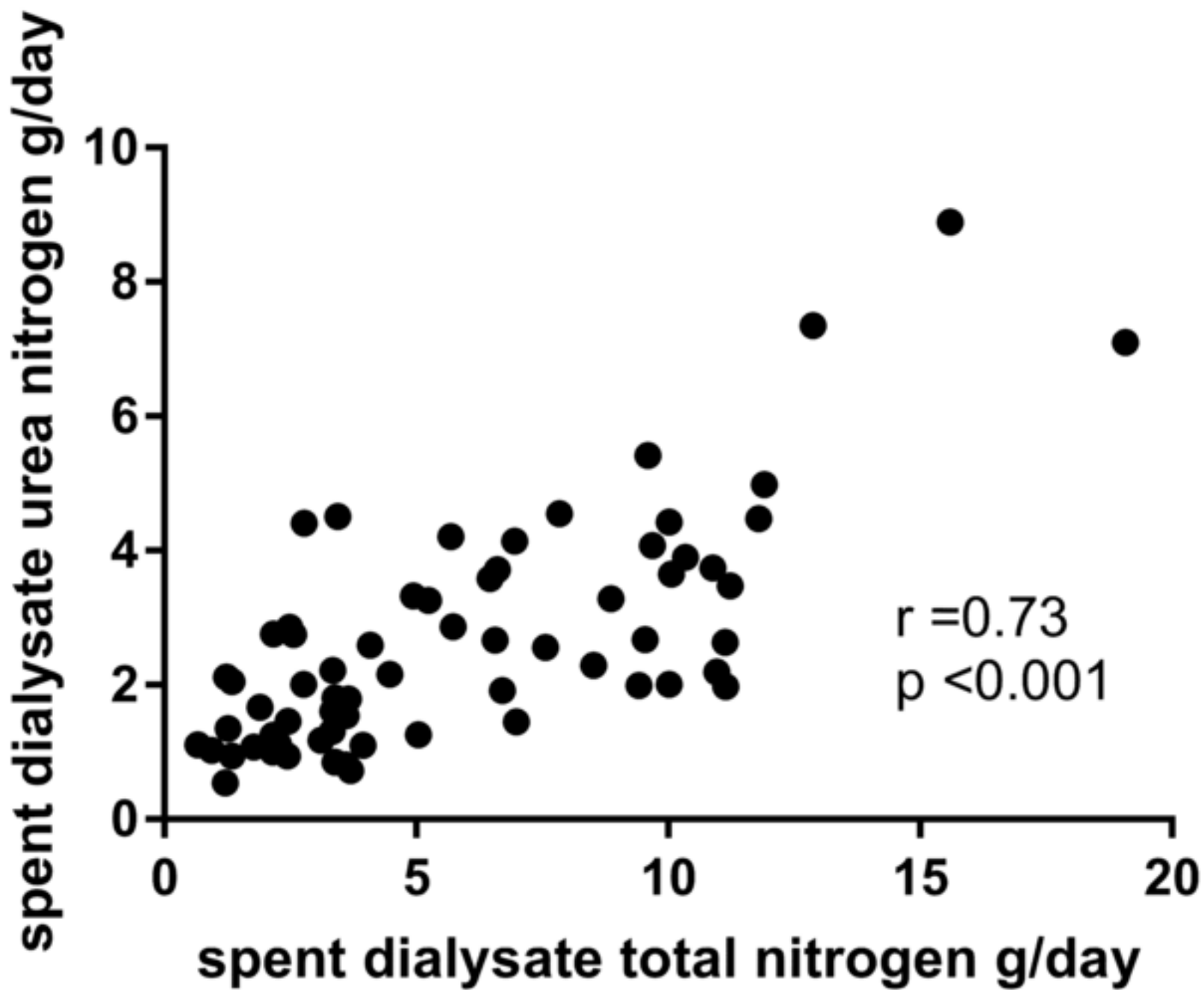


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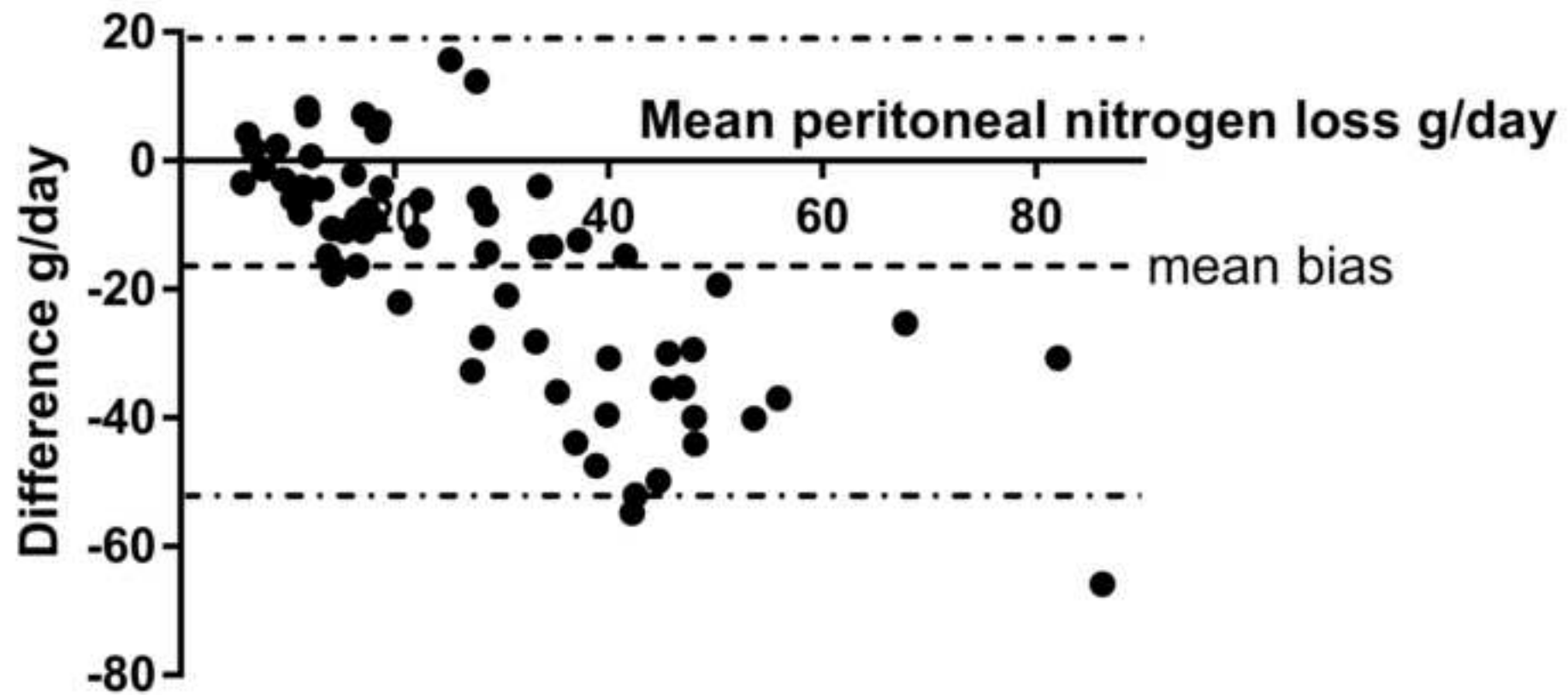


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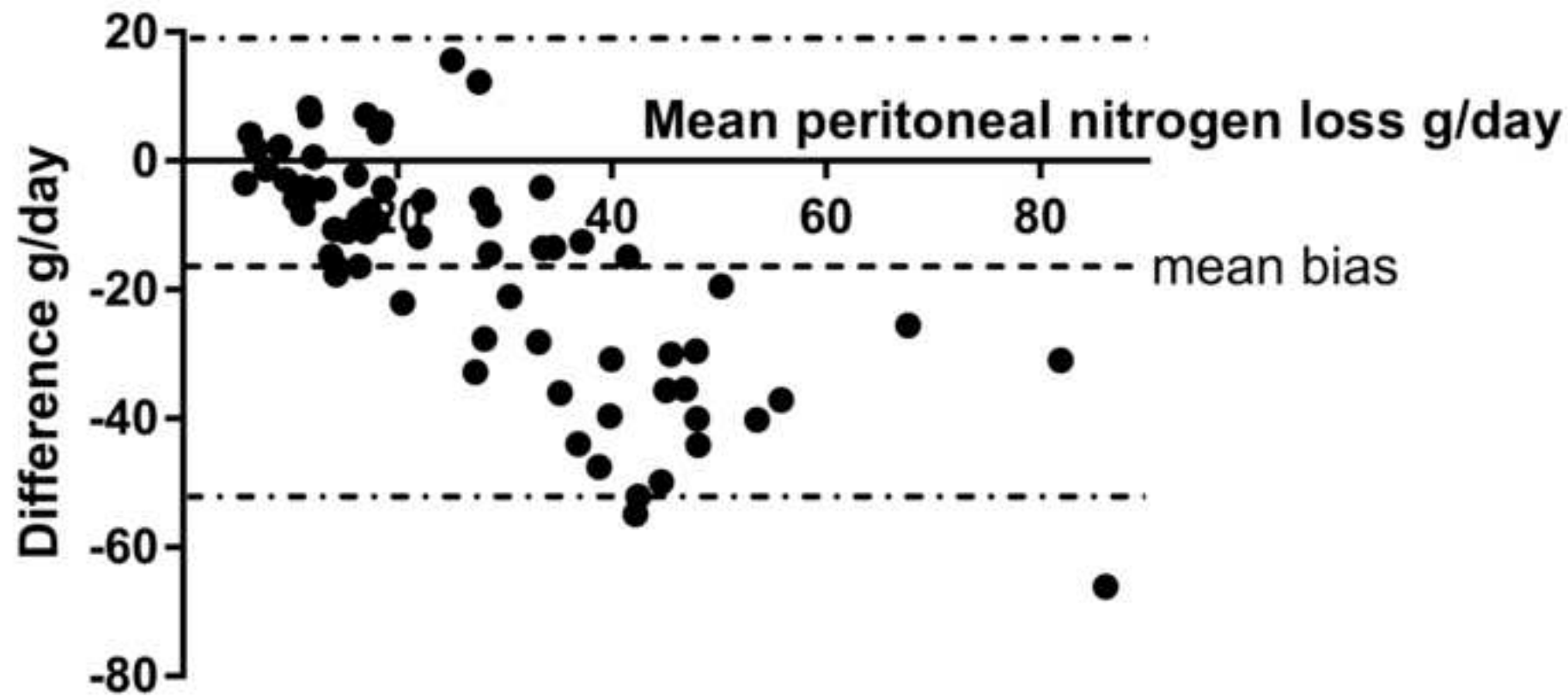


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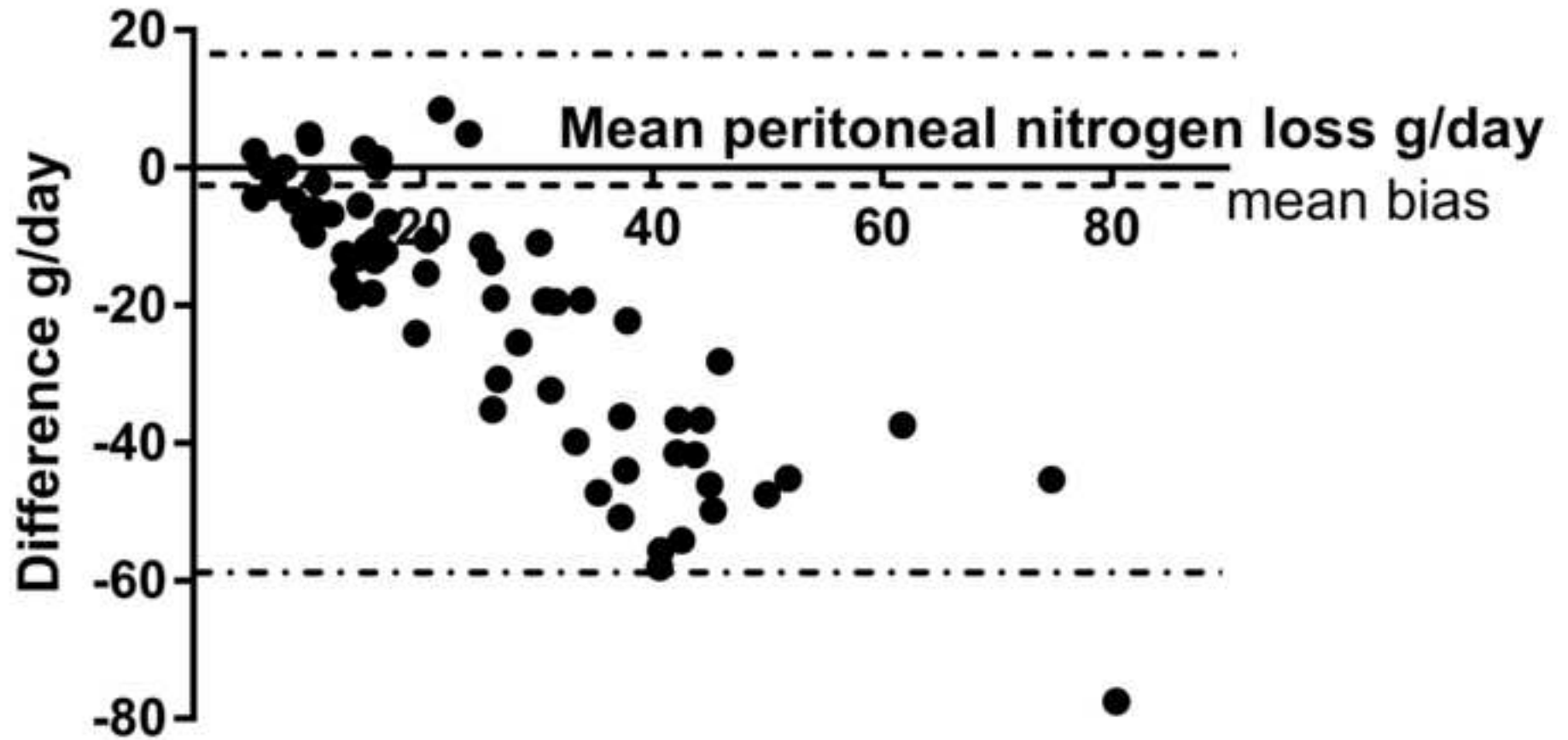
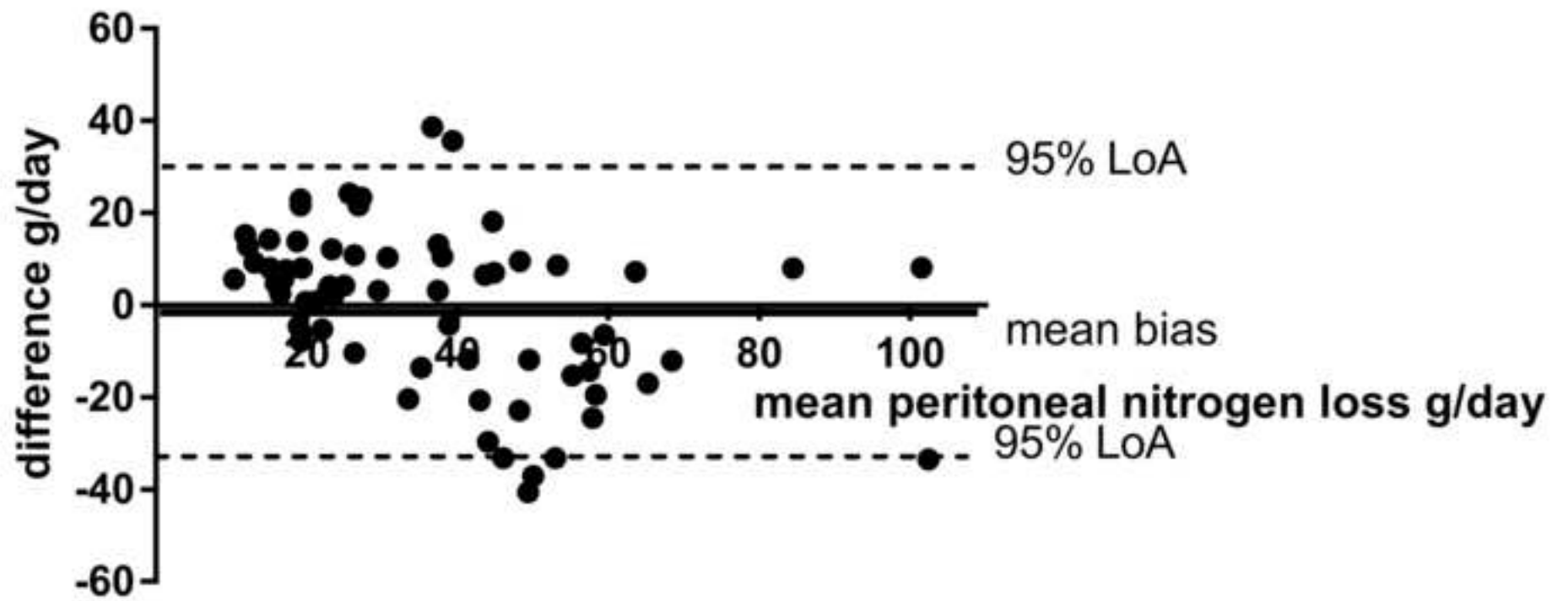


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1 Table 1. Patient demographics, dialysis prescriptions, body composition and  
 2 laboratory investigations. Number (no), Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis  
 3 (CAPD), Duration of PD treatment (vintage) months, Results expressed as  
 4 integers, mean  $\pm$  standard deviation, median (interquartile range) or percentage.

5 .  
 6

variable	
Male - number. (%)	41 (61.2)
Age, years	67.3 (53.2-79.4)
Ethnicity no (%)	
White	31 (46.3)
Black	16 (23.9)
Asian	20 (29.9)
Diabetes mellitus - no.(%)	26 (38.8)
Body mass index kg/m <sup>2</sup>	27.3 $\pm$ 5.2
Skeletal muscle mass kg	26.7 $\pm$ 6.7
% Body fat	32.6 $\pm$ 10.2
Haemoglobin, g/dL	10.9 $\pm$ 13.9
Albumin, g/L	37.7 $\pm$ 3.2
C reactive protein mg/L	4.0 (2.0-12.3)
Serum calcium mmol/L	2.28 $\pm$ 0.17
Serum phosphate mmol/L	1.63 $\pm$ 0.42
Dialysis vintage, months	15.1 (5.5-31.9)
Peritoneal equilibrium test no (%)	
Fast	20 (29.9)
Fast Average	31 (46.3)
Slow Average	7 (10.4)
Slow	9 (13.4)
CAPD no (%)	23 (34.3)

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**Data Statement**

**[Click here to download Data Statement: Data statement.docx](#)**