Atrial Fibrillation (Non-valvular): prescriber decision support on anticoagulation

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Scope:
This document is intended as prescriber decision support for prescribing anticoagulants for patients with non-valvular AF. The diagnosis and management of atrial fibrillation is beyond the scope of this document and prescribers are referred to the full NICE clinical guideline or NICE Pathway.

As the decision to take an anticoagulant or not should be a patient level decision supported by information from the prescriber, this document is intended for use with the NICE patient decision aid, (which presents information in a patient friendly format including CHA₂DS₂-VASc and HAS-BLED scores).
Assessing patients for anticoagulation in AF
(This guidance applies to patients with non-valvular paroxysmal, persistent or permanent AF, atrial flutter or continuing risk of arrhythmia recurrence after cardioversion back to sinus rhythm)

Assess the patient for anticoagulation using the below risk scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congestive Heart Failure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hypertension (uncontrolled SBP &gt;160mmHg)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Liver disease (Cirrhosis or bilirubin &gt;2x normal with AST/ALT/ALP &gt;3x normal)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age &gt;75 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Renal disease (Dialysis, transplant, or &gt;200 micromol/L)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age between 65 and 74 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Stroke history</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes mellitus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bleeding history or predisposition (e.g. anaemia)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke / TIA / Thrombo-embolism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Labile INRs (i.e. Time in Therapeutic Range &lt; 60%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vascular disease (previous MI, peripheral arterial disease or aortic plaque)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Elderly (e.g. age &gt; 65 years or frail condition)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Drugs (concomitant antiplatelets, NSAIDs etc) or alcohol abuse (1 point each)</td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Score: (maximum score of 9)

Address modifiable risks where possible

Based on the above assessment patient refuses or is not a candidate for anticoagulation

Document decision in patient’s notes and review annually, or when patient reaches 65 years old or if they develop any of the following at any age:
- Diabetes, heart failure, peripheral arterial disease
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke, transient ischaemic attack or systemic thromboembolism.

Do not offer aspirin monotherapy solely for stroke prevention to people with atrial fibrillation. However, patients on existing antiplatelet therapy for another indication may continue as necessary.

Patient is a candidate for and consents to anticoagulation
As per NICE CG180, anticoagulation may be with:
- a vitamin K antagonist (warfarin) OR
- one of the new oral anticoagulants (DOACs), e.g. apixaban, dabigatran etexilate, or rivaroxaban.
- Consider referral if anticoagulation contraindicated or not tolerated

See flowchart on page 2 below for individual patient factors to consider when choosing an anticoagulant

CHA2DS2-VASc score of ≥ 2
Offer anticoagulation taking bleeding risk into account

CHA2DS2-VASc score of 1
Consider for anticoagulation taking bleeding risk into account

CHA2DS2-VASc score of 0
Do not offer anticoagulation for stroke prevention in AF
### Anticoagulation choice and patient factors

**From page 1:** Patient is a candidate for and consents to anticoagulation to reduce the risk of stroke

- Discuss the options for anticoagulation with the person and base the choice on:
  - clinical features (see per flowchart below)
  - patient preferences (see NICE patient decision aid available here)

- **Baseline tests prior to initiation:**
  - U+Es (and **Creatinine clearance (CrCl)** calculated)
  - FBC
  - Clotting
  - LFTs
  - Weight

  If results of these tests are abnormal, investigate as appropriate prior to initiation of anticoagulation

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**Does the patient have any of the following?**

- **Significant (moderate or worse) valvular disease (including rheumatic valvular disease and or prosthetic valves)?**
- **Patient being considered for cardioversion?**
- **Renal disease** **Creatinine clearance** <30ml/min? (caution if borderline or at risk of acute kidney injury)
- **Remains on concomitant interacting medicines?** e.g. dronedarone, azole antifungals, HIV protease inhibitors, tacrolimus, ciclosporin, strong CYP3A4 inducers – see summary table below
- **Needs concomitant antiplatelets** (i.e. recent MI or stent insertion)?
- **Extremes of body weight** (<50kg or >120kg)
- **Poor concordance** anticipated

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**Consider WARFARIN**

(as DOACs either contraindicated, unlicensed or not recommended)

Initiation of warfarin should be as per current pathway

See initiation checklist below

**Consider a DOAC**

(see table 1 below)

(as warfarin either contraindicated, or not recommended)

See initiation checklist below

**Consider warfarin or a DOAC**

(see table 1 below or comparison table for other patient factors)

See initiation checklist below

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**Table 1: Preferred choice of DOAC (based on patient factors)**

Where a DOAC is considered appropriate, local consensus is that **apixaban or rivaroxaban may be suitable options for most patients**, although in line with NICE guidance, other DOACs can be considered. The following patient factors may suggest a preferred agent

| Renal impairment (Creatinine clearance 30-50ml/min) | Apixaban (as per NICE Chronic Kidney Disease) |
| Increase bleeding risk (HAS-BLED ≥3) | Apixaban |
| Patient definitely requires compliance aid | Apixaban or Rivaroxaban (NOT dabigatran) |
| Patient has swallowing difficulties / enteral feeding tubes | Rivaroxaban (licensed) |
| Patient with none of the above factors | As per statement above: Apixaban or Rivaroxaban may be suitable but see appendix 1 for other patient factors and interactions |
### Checklist and process for initiation of all anticoagulants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiation points</th>
<th>Completed by / date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inform the patient of indication for the new medicine, dose, frequency, duration of therapy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasise importance of concordance to therapy especially with shorter acting agents (DOACs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss possible undesirable effects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform patient what to do if they miss a dose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss what to do in the event of injury / bleeding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise patient to inform all healthcare professionals and to discuss OTC medicines with pharmacist (avoid aspirin/NSAIDs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide patient with an alert card (see formulary or manufacturer)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommend the patient to discuss this new medicine with their pharmacist as part of the free new medicines service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### WARFARIN

**Initiation**

Warfarin should be initiated as per local pathway (traffic light classification **GREEN**)

**Monitoring**

For warfarin see monitoring and reviewing section [here](#)

**Review**

Review the need for and quality of anticoagulation at least annually or more frequently if clinically relevant events occur affecting anticoagulation or bleeding risk

### DOACs

**Initiation**

DOACs may be initiated by a primary care prescriber or non-specialist in secondary care (traffic light classification **AMBER 3**). For dose and frequency see individual drug in [Appendix 1](#)

South Nottinghamshire and NUH: Patient may be referred to local anticoagulant service for counselling if clinician and patient feel this would be beneficial

**Monitoring**

For DOACs see monitoring and reviewing section [here](#)

**Review**

Review the need for and quality of anticoagulation at least annually or more frequently if clinically relevant events occur affecting anticoagulation or bleeding risk
Warfarin – monitoring and reviewing

Reviewing warfarin patients:
Once stabilised review time in therapeutic range (TTR) at each visit. The usual therapeutic range for AF patients is an INR of 2-3.

Reviews should be done by the service monitoring and dosing the patient as per the following:
- use a validated method of measurement such as the Rosendaal method for computer-assisted dosing or proportion of tests in range for manual dosing
- exclude measurements taken during the first 6 weeks of treatment
- calculate TTR over a maintenance period of at least 6 months

Baseline blood tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient group</th>
<th>U + Es (Creatinine clearance)</th>
<th>Full blood count</th>
<th>Coagulation screen</th>
<th>Liver function tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Follow up tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient group</th>
<th>International Normalised Ratio (INR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>As required or as per protocol for self monitoring patients</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. In addition to adequate clinical surveillance, laboratory testing of haemoglobin/haematocrit could be of value to detect occult bleeding, as judged to be appropriate

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Once stabilised review time in therapeutic range (TTR) at each visit. The usual therapeutic range for AF patients is an INR of 2-3.

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- calculate TTR over a maintenance period of at least 6 months

TTR ≥ 65%
Do any of the following apply?:
- Intolerance or allergy to vitamin K antagonists (e.g. warfarin or acenocoumarol)
- History of significant bleed associated with poor warfarin control
- Patient has had in the last 6 months:
  - 1 x INR > 8
  - 2 x INR > 5
  - 2 x INR < 1.5

NO YES
Continue dose adjusted warfarin
Review patient’s risk of stroke and bleeding risk at annual review

TTR < 65%
Take into account and address where possible:
- cognitive function
- adherence to prescribed therapy
- Illness
- interacting drug therapy
- lifestyle factors including diet and alcohol consumption
- Consider self-monitoring as per NICE Guidance if concordance affected by inconvenience of INR testing

Reassess at appropriate time interval to assess improvement in control if measures put in place

Improved control? (i.e. TTR ≥ 65%)

YES NO

If poor anticoagulation control cannot be improved:
- discuss risks and benefits of alternative strategies with the patient. Exclude all reasons for poor INR control despite good compliance before considering a DOAC.
- Inform local anticoagulation service if switching therapy
- Refer to Appendix 2 for information about practicalities of switching between anticoagulants and initiation checklist

Baseline blood tests

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</table>

Follow up tests

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N.B. In addition to adequate clinical surveillance, laboratory testing of haemoglobin/haematocrit could be of value to detect occult bleeding, as judged to be appropriate
DOACs – monitoring and reviewing

Clinical trials have demonstrated that the therapeutic anticoagulation effect of DOACs does not require routine monitoring.

Unlike warfarin, a prothrombin time may not be sensitive to their anticoagulant effect. Likewise an INR will not demonstrate the level of anticoagulation.

As DOACs are predominantly eliminated by the renal route, it is prudent to monitor the renal function of a patient taking a DOAC. The following regimen is broadly in line with NICE guidance on Chronic Kidney Disease and based on consensus clinician opinion. This may recommend more frequent monitoring than that advised in the manufacturer’s summary of product characteristics.

Creatinine clearance must be used for calculating renal function using the Cockroft and Gault equation (see below). eGFR is not a suitable alternative:

\[
\text{CrCl (ml/min)} = \left( \frac{140 - \text{age}}{\text{wt (kg)}} \right) \times 1.04 \quad \text{(female)} \quad \text{or} \quad 1.23 \quad \text{(male)}
\]

serum creatinine (micromol/l)

NB Clinical systems in primary care may have an inbuilt Cockcroft-Gault based renal function calculator which can be used to dose DOACs. These calculators make adjustments for a body mass index that is outside normal ranges and may produce a slightly different result to the equation provided.

Criteria for review and discontinuation of DOACs:

Should the individual patient be deemed at a greater risk of developing renal dysfunction, more frequent monitoring may be warranted. The frequency of testing will need to be increased if there is rapid progression, or during intercurrent illness and perioperatively in all patients with CKD.

### Baseline blood tests

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Follow up tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient group</th>
<th>U + Es (Creatinine clearance)</th>
<th>Full blood count</th>
<th>Coagulation screen</th>
<th>Liver function tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creatinine Clearance &gt; 60ml/min</td>
<td>Annually ✓</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>✓ Inappropriate without correct reagent</td>
<td>X Not generally required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creatinine Clearance 30-60ml/min</td>
<td>Six Monthly ✓</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In addition to adequate clinical surveillance, laboratory testing of haemoglobin/haematocrit could be of value to detect occult bleeding, as judged to be appropriate.

- Clinical trials have demonstrated that the therapeutic anticoagulation effect of DOACs does not require routine monitoring.
- Unlike warfarin, a prothrombin time may not be sensitive to their anticoagulant effect. Likewise an INR will not demonstrate the level of anticoagulation.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Side Effect</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haemorrhage</td>
<td>Refer patient immediately to Accident and Emergency (A&amp;E) if serious bleeding occurs e.g. GI bleeding, epistaxis lasting more than 1 hr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyspepsia</td>
<td>Common with dabigatran. Consider a proton pump inhibitor. If persists consider alternative anticoagulant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexplained acute fall in haemoglobin or blood pressure</td>
<td>Refer patient immediately to A&amp;E for investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma (especially to the head)</td>
<td>Consider referral to A&amp;E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive bruising</td>
<td>Seek immediate haematologist advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any acute illness that MAY affect renal function</td>
<td>Measure U+Es and calculate creatinine clearance. Reduce dose or withhold treatment if required. Consider seeking advice regarding restarting treatment from the local anticoagulation service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant reduction in renal function (and see below)</td>
<td>Reduce dose as appropriate according to the medicine’s recommended dosing schedule in renal impairment (see above for CrCl calculation). If renal function continues to worsen discuss with haematologist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall in creatinine clearance to &lt;30ml/min with dabigatran or &lt;15ml/min with rivaroxaban or apixaban</td>
<td>Stop DOAC, assess for bleeding and seek advice as to whether specific assays are indicated / alternative anticoagulation required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References

1. Warfarin Summary of Product Characteristics (Marevan). Last updated 26/05/2014
2. Xarelto Summary of Product Characteristics. Last updated 06/01/2014 see www.medicines.org.uk
15. MHRA Drug Safety Update October 2013: New oral anticoagulants apixaban (Eliquis ▼), dabigatran (Pradaxa) and rivaroxaban (Xarelto ▼): risk of serious haemorrhage—clarified contraindications apply to all three medicines. Available at: http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/DrugSafetyUpdate/CON322347
Appendix 1: Anticoagulant comparison *(For more detailed information, refer to manufacturers Summary of Product Characteristics (SPCs)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medicine</th>
<th>Warfarin</th>
<th>Rivaroxaban</th>
<th>Apixaban</th>
<th>Dabigatran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
<td>3mg tablets are used in Nottinghamshire <em>(other strengths may be used in other areas)</em></td>
<td>15 and 20mg film coated tablets <em>NB. 10mg tablets are not licensed for AF.</em></td>
<td>2.5 and 5mg film coated tablets</td>
<td>110mg and 150mg hard capsules <em>NB. 75mg capsules are not licensed for AF.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Licensed Indication</strong></td>
<td>Prophylaxis of systemic embolism in patients with atrial fibrillation.</td>
<td>All DOACS are licensed for the prevention of stroke and systemic embolism in adult patients with non-valvular atrial fibrillation with one or more risk factors, such as congestive heart failure (NYHA Class ≥ II stated for apixaban and dabigatran), hypertension, age ≥ 75 years, diabetes mellitus, prior stroke or transient ischaemic attack.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Dosing (NB applies to AF indication only)** | Variable depending on INR *(international normalised ratio)* | **20 mg ONCE daily**  
Reduced to 15 mg once daily if CrCl <50ml/min (see below) | **5mg TWICE daily**  
Reduced to 2.5 mg twice daily if at least two of the following:  
- age ≥ 80 years,  
- body weight ≤ 60 kg, or  
- serum creatinine ≥ 133 micromole/L. | **150mg TWICE daily**  
Reduced to 110mg twice daily if patient is ≥ 80 yrs or taking verapamil  
Also consider 110mg twice daily if:  
- aged between 75-80 years  
- moderate renal impairment (CrCL 30-50 mL/min)  
- gastritis, esophagitis or gastroesophageal reflux  
- increased risk of bleeding |
| **Use in renal impairment** | Dose as per INR as in normal renal function | Renal function should be assessed prior to DOAC treatment in all patients. Local specialists and ESC Guidelines recommend avoiding DOACs in patients with Creatinine Clearance *(CrCL) <30ml/min due to increased risk of drug accumulation. Patients who develop acute renal failure should discontinue DOAC. Creatinine clearance must be calculated (see here for calculator), eGFR is NOT considered a suitable alternative.  
CrCl 15-49 ml/min: 15 mg OD (use with caution and see above if CrCl < 30ml/min)  
CrCl < 15ml/min: Contraindicated | CrCl 15-29: 2.5mg BD  
CrCl < 15ml/min: Contraindicated | CrCl < 30ml/min: Contraindicated |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medicine</th>
<th>Warfarin$^1$</th>
<th>Rivaroxaban$^2$</th>
<th>Apixaban$^3$</th>
<th>Dabigatran$^4$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use in hepatic impairment</td>
<td>Should be avoided in severe hepatic impairment, especially if prothrombin time is already prolonged.</td>
<td>Contraindicated in patients with hepatic disease associated with coagulopathy and clinically relevant bleeding risk including cirrhotic patients with Child Pugh B and C</td>
<td>Prior to initiating apixaban, liver function testing should be performed. Contraindicated in patients with hepatic disease associated with coagulopathy and clinically relevant bleeding risk. Not recommended in patients with severe hepatic impairment. Caution in patients with mild or moderate hepatic impairment (Child Pugh A or B), but no dose adjustment is required. Caution in patients with elevated liver enzymes (ALT/AST &gt;2 x ULN) or total bilirubin ≥1.5 x ULN as these patients were excluded in clinical trials.</td>
<td>Contraindicated in hepatic impairment or liver disease expected to have any impact on survival Not recommended in mild- moderate hepatic impairment with liver enzymes &gt;2 ULN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Take at the same time each day.</td>
<td>The tablet is taken with food</td>
<td>Swallowed with water, with or without food.</td>
<td>Take with or without food. Swallow whole with a glass of water, to facilitate delivery to the stomach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitability for patients with swallowing difficulties/enteral tubes</td>
<td>May be crushed and dispersed for enteral tube administration (outside of license) Suspension is not licensed for enteral tube administration.</td>
<td>May be given via gastric tube or crushed and mixed with water or apple puree for patients with swallowing difficulties (licensed route of admin)</td>
<td>Tablets may be crushed and dispersed in dextrose 5% (unlicensed, info from personal communication with manufacturer).</td>
<td>Capsules should not be opened-increased risk of bleeding (oral bioavailability may be increased by 75 % when the pellets are removed from the capsule shell)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraindications</td>
<td>• Hypersensitivity • Haemorrhagic stroke • Clinically significant bleeding • Within 72 hours of major surgery with risk of severe bleeding</td>
<td>All DOACS are contraindicated if: • Hypersensitivity to drug or excipients • Active clinically significant bleeding • Risk factors for major bleeding e.g. current or recent gastrointestinal ulceration, presence of malignant neoplasms at high risk of bleeding, recent brain or spinal injury, recent brain, spinal or ophthalmic surgery, recent intracranial haemorrhage, known or suspected oesophageal varices, arteriovenous malformations, vascular aneurysms or major intraspinal or intracerebral vascular abnormalities. • Dabigatran is contraindicated and rivaroxaban and apixaban not recommended in patients with prosthetic heart valves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Drug Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medicine</th>
<th>Warfarin&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Rivaroxaban&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Apixaban&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Dabigatran&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many- refer to BNF or SPC for more information</td>
<td>All DOACs are <strong>contraindicated</strong> with other anticoagulants and should be used with <strong>caution</strong> with antiplatelets (e.g. aspirin, clopidogrel, prasugrel, ticagrelor etc) and NSAIDs. Concomitant use with <strong>azole antimycotics</strong> (e.g. ketoconazole,itraconazole, voriconazole) or <strong>HIV protease inhibitors</strong> (e.g. ritonavir) is <strong>contraindicated</strong> with dabigatran and <strong>not recommended</strong> with rivaroxaban or apixaban due to increased plasma levels and bleeding risk. Concomitant use with rifampicin, phenytoin, carbamazepine, phenobarbital or St. John's Wort is <strong>contraindicated</strong> with dabigatran, should be <strong>avoided</strong> with rivaroxaban and used with <strong>caution</strong> with apixaban.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With INR monitoring warfarin doses can be adjusted to maintain anticoagulation during therapy with many concomitant interacting medicines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dronedarone should be avoided.</td>
<td>Use with <strong>posaconazole</strong> not recommended.</td>
<td>Contraindicated with <strong>ciclosporin</strong> and <strong>dronedarone.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use with <strong>posaconazole</strong> not recommended.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Use with <strong>tacrolimus</strong> should be avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Clarithromycin,</strong> <strong>erythromycin</strong> and <strong>fluconazole</strong> should be used with caution in patients with renal impairment.</td>
<td>Use with caution with, <strong>SSRIs/SNRIs,</strong> clarithromycin, amiodarone, posaconazole, quinidine, verapamil (dosage reduction required-see above)</td>
<td>Use with <strong>tacrolimus</strong> should be avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food interactions</td>
<td>INR altered by some food/ drink</td>
<td>No specific foods known to interact – see administration section above for advice on taking with or without food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common side effects</td>
<td>See Summary of Product characteristics</td>
<td>See Summary of Product characteristics</td>
<td>See Summary of Product characteristics</td>
<td>See Summary of Product characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major bleed risk compared to warfarin</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Similar risk (ROCKET-AF)</td>
<td>Reduced risk (NNT= 104, ARISTOTLE)</td>
<td>Similar risk with 150mg. Reduced risk with 110mg (NNT= 154, RE-LY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intracranial bleed risk compared to warfarin</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Reduced risk (NNT=500, ROCKET-AF)</td>
<td>Reduced risk (NNT=213, ARISTOTLE)</td>
<td>Reduced risk (NNT=228 with 150mg, 197 with 110mg, RE-LY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastrointestinal bleed risk compared to warfarin</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Similar risk (ROCKET-AF)</td>
<td>Similar risk (ARISTOTLE)</td>
<td>Increased risk (NNH=205 with 150mg, RE-LY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyspepsia incidence compared to warfarin</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Similar incidence (ROCKET-AF)</td>
<td>No dyspepsia reported (ARISTOTLE)</td>
<td>Increased incidence (NNH=17 with 110mg, 18 with 150mg, RE-LY) Consider co-prescription of a PPI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **contraindicated**
2. **not recommended**
3. **should be avoided**
4. **should be used with caution**

---

**INR** altered by some food/drink. No specific foods known to interact – see administration section above for advice on taking with or without food.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medicine</th>
<th>Warfarin</th>
<th>Rivaroxaban</th>
<th>Apixaban</th>
<th>Dabigatran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suitability for patients with compliance problems</strong></td>
<td>Some patients may struggle with variability of dosing. INR gives indication of compliance. Generally considered not suitable for multi-compartment compliance aids (MCAs) due to variability of dosing, but may be considered if a mechanism of managing dose changes is assured.</td>
<td>Shorter half-life of DOACs may mean missed doses result in more time without anticoagulation. Difficult to measure compliance. May be put in MCAs (no special storage conditions required).</td>
<td>May be put in MCAs (no special storage conditions required).</td>
<td>Not suitable for use in MCAs (unstable out of original packaging).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanism of Action</strong></td>
<td>Inhibitor of clotting factors II, VII, IX &amp; X</td>
<td>Factor Xa inhibitor</td>
<td>Direct thrombin inhibitor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extremes of body weight</strong></td>
<td>Dose as per INR</td>
<td>Seek specialist advice for patients at extremes of body weight (&lt;50kg or &gt;120kg)</td>
<td>Extremes in body weight (&lt;50 kg or &gt;120 kg) had a small influence on rivaroxaban plasma concentrations (less than 25 %). No dose adjustment is necessary. Low body weight (&lt;60 kg) may increase haemorrhagic risk. Compared to apixaban exposure in subjects with body weight of 65 to 85 kg, body weight &gt; 120 kg was associated with approximately 30% lower exposure and body weight &lt; 50 kg was associated with approximately 30% higher exposure.</td>
<td>Low body weight (&lt;50kg) is associated with increased dabigatran exposure and bleeding risk. The dabigatran trough concentrations were about 20 % lower in patients with a body weight &gt; 100 kg compared with 50-100 kg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reversibility (a separate guideline is available in secondary care)</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No specific reversal agent. No real evidence or experience on reversal</td>
<td>No specific reversal agent. No real evidence or experience on reversal</td>
<td>Yes (NUH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pregnancy and breastfeeding—refer to specialist anticoagulation services</strong></td>
<td>Contraindicated in the first and third trimesters of pregnancy and within 48 hours postpartum. Warfarin can be used during breast-feeding.</td>
<td>Contraindicated in pregnancy and breast feeding</td>
<td>Not recommended during pregnancy. A decision must be made to either discontinue breast-feeding or to discontinue/abstain from apixaban therapy.</td>
<td>Should not be used during pregnancy unless clearly necessary. Breast-feeding should be discontinued during treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>Warfarin¹</td>
<td>Rivaroxaban²</td>
<td>Apixaban³</td>
<td>Dabigatran⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long term safety</strong></td>
<td>Has been used as an anticoagulant for many years</td>
<td>Not known (study follow up period 1.9 years)</td>
<td>Not known (study follow up period 1.8 years)</td>
<td>Not known (study follow up period 2 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost (August 2014, may vary according to local procurement discounts)</strong></td>
<td>£240/ year inclusive of monitoring costs (NUH data) Medicine cost alone of 1mg/ml suspension is £1300/ year.</td>
<td>£767/ year</td>
<td>£802/ year</td>
<td>£802/ year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 2: Switching anticoagulant therapy for non-valvular AF patients only

(Nb that this information applies to non-valvular AF indication only- see SPCs for alternative indications)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warfarin to DOAC</th>
<th>Rivaroxaban&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Apixaban&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Dabigatran&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>Stop warfarin and initiate rivaroxaban when INR is ≤ 3.0.</td>
<td>Stop warfarin and initiate apixaban when INR is ≤ 2.0.</td>
<td>Stop warfarin and initiate dabigatran when INR is ≤ 2.0.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Oral to parenteral anticoagulant**

Parenteral anticoagulant can be started immediately

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parenteral anticoagulants to oral anticoagulant</th>
<th>LMWH: Start rivaroxaban 0 to 2 hours before the time of the next scheduled dose</th>
<th>LMWH: Start dabigatran 0 to 2 hours before the time of the next scheduled dose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warfarin can be given concomitantly with parenteral anticoagulant Concomitant therapy may be required until therapeutic level achieved or as per local policy</td>
<td>UFH: Start rivaroxaban at the time of discontinuation of UFH</td>
<td>UFH: Start dabigatran at the time of discontinuation of UFH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DOAC to Warfarin**

Not applicable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Discuss with local anticoagulation service before switching depending on local pathway for warfarin initiation and monitoring (below information is a guide if prescriber is responsible for coumarin monitoring)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give warfarin and rivaroxaban concurrently until the INR is ≥ 2.0.</td>
<td>Give warfarin and apixaban concurrently until the INR is ≥ 2.0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate warfarin at standard dose for 2 days and then dose as per INR. INRs should be taken at least 24hrs after the previous dose of rivaroxaban (immediately before the next dose)</td>
<td>Initiate warfarin at standard dose for 2 days and then dose as per INR. Obtain an INR prior to the next scheduled dose of apixaban.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INRs may be falsely elevated during rivaroxaban therapy, but once rivaroxaban is discontinued, may be done reliably at least 24 hours after the last dose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjust the starting time of warfarin based on CrCL as follows: • CrCL ≥ 50 mL/min, start warfarin 3 days before discontinuing dabigatran • CrCL ≥ 30-49 mL/min, start warfarin 2 days before discontinuing dabigatran INRs may be falsely elevated until dabigatran has been stopped for at least 2 days. Until then, INR values should be interpreted with caution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key**:

- LMWH = low molecular weight heparin (e.g. enoxaparin), UFH = unfractionated heparin,
Appendix 3: Notes on HAS-BLED score

The HAS-BLED score estimates the 1-year risk for major bleeding (intracranial, hospitalization, haemoglobin decrease > 2 g/L, and/or transfusion) \(^1\)

“HAS-BLED should not be used on its own to exclude patients from oral anticoagulant therapy; it allows the clinician to identify bleeding risk factors and to correct those that are modifiable, i.e. by controlling blood pressure, removing concomitant antiplatelet or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, and counseling the patient about reducing alcohol intake (if excessive). Thus, bleeding risk assessment with HAS-BLED should not be used as an excuse not to prescribe oral anticoagulant, but rather to highlight those patients in whom caution with such treatment and regular review is warranted”. \(^2\)

A HAS-BLED score of ≥3 indicates that caution is warranted when prescribing oral anticoagulation and regular review is recommended. \(^1\)

The HAS-BLED score total points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Bleeding Risk (% per annum)</th>
<th>Risk description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9</td>
<td>Insufficient data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For comments and feedback please contact: NottsAPC@nottspct.nhs.uk