



Self-monitoring and self-management can improve quality of anticoagulant therapy

Clinical question

Compared with standard monitoring, how effective are self-monitoring and self-management of oral anticoagulant therapy?

Bottom line

Compared with standard monitoring by a physician, self-monitoring and/or self-management can improve the quality of oral anticoagulant therapy. Self-management alone halved thromboembolic events and mortality rates, with no effect on major bleeds. Self-monitoring alone halved the number of major haemorrhages, but did not significantly reduce the rate of thrombotic events or all-cause mortality.

Caveat

Self-monitoring or self-management was not feasible for up to half of the patients requiring anticoagulant therapy. Reasons included patient refusal, exclusion by their GP, and inability to complete training.

Context

The introduction of portable monitors (point-of-care devices) for the management of patients on oral anticoagulation therapy allows self-testing by the patient at home. Patients who self-test can either adjust their medication according to a predetermined dose-INR schedule (self-management) or they can call a clinic to be told the appropriate dose adjustment (self-monitoring).

Cochrane Systematic Review

Garcia-Alamino JM et al. Self-monitoring and self-management of oral anticoagulation. Cochrane Reviews, 2010, Issue 4. Article No. CD003839. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD003839.pub2. *This review contains 18 studies involving 4723 participants.*

PEARLS No. 270, June 2010, written by Brian R McAvoy

PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Systematic Reviews for primary care practitioners – developed by the Cochrane Primary Care Field, New Zealand Branch of the Australasian Cochrane Centre at the Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care, University of Auckland and funded by the New Zealand Guidelines Group. New Zealanders can access the Cochrane Library free via www.nzgg.org.nz

PEARLS provide guidance on whether a treatment is effective or ineffective. PEARLS are prepared as an educational resource and do not replace clinician judgement in the management of individual cases. View PEARLS online at: www.nzdoctor.co.nz; www.nzgg.org.nz; www.cochranepriarycare.org