

[P-596R] Evaluating anticoagulation management among patients with a supratherapeutic international normalized ratio (INR) in a Veterans Affairs medical center

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Each year, over 1,000 patients receive anticoagulation therapy at our Veterans Affairs medical center. These patients have their warfarin therapy monitored by a variety of health care practitioners, including internists, residents, surgeons, nurses, and pharmacists. Recently, there have been a few major hemorrhagic events within the institution secondary to warfarin therapy. Due to these events, an evaluation is being conducted to determine the various management strategies utilized by different practitioners for patients presenting with elevated international normalized ratios (INRs). All patients with an INR ≥ 5 during the period of May 16, 1999 through May 15, 2000 will be evaluated. Data to be collected will include: patient demographics, anticoagulation indication, target INR range, supratherapeutic INR measurement, warfarin dose at the time of the elevated INR, incidence of hemorrhagic events, action taken (i.e., number of warfarin dosages held, use of phytonadione or vitamin K, dosage adjustment made, etc.), and concomitant medications. The data from this evaluation will then be used to improve the overall management of patients on anticoagulation therapy and to try to prevent future adverse hemorrhagic events from occurring. Educational conferences will be provided to physicians to review appropriate anticoagulation management and to discuss the data from this evaluation. If it is found that improved consistency among various practitioners is needed, guidelines will be developed for such areas as managing hemorrhagic events and utilizing vitamin K. A follow up evaluation will then be conducted.