

## Improving adherence in patients on direct oral anticoagulants (DOACs)

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The anticoagulation service at the Royal Free Hospital continues to grow, with 2316 new patients in 2014 and more expected in 2015, resulting in the service seeing around 50 new patients per week. 90% of new patients are now initiated onto NOACs whilst the majority of the 6,500 existing patients are prescribed warfarin. The anticoagulation service operates a paperless system and accepts referrals from within the organisation, GPs and external organisations.

The service carries out over 100,000 follow-up visits per year and despite growing patient numbers has consistently achieved excellent benchmarking results over the last 3 years. Much of this success is due to high levels of adherence amongst patients.

The success of the service is also down to how it operates. Rather than operating in isolation, the anticoagulation service works with doctors to handle inpatient dosing, discharge and handover to GPs, working across the whole of the organisation to change practices.

The service has the following aims:

- Achieve and maintain safety and effectiveness
- Increase patient adherence and attendance to follow-up appointments
- Reduce over and under anticoagulation and prolonged associated hospital stay
- Provide comprehensive and individualised patient care
- Ensure continuity and improve communication, information and education for patients, relatives, carers and primary healthcare

For every patient who is seen by the service, standardised documentation is completed regardless of who the patient is seen by. This ensures consistency in supporting adherence and makes the patient population easier to report on.

The 2009 NICE clinical guidance on patient adherence highlights the quality of information given to the patients, the standardisation of assessment and the patient's involvement in decision-making as key aspects of improving adherence rather than simply the amount of time spent with the patient.

With an estimated 50% of medicines for chronic conditions not taken as prescribed, a big concern if people are not monitoring NOAC patients is how do you know if patients are taking them as instructed?

Involving the patient in the decision-making process and providing as much information as possible leads to better adherence, as it educates the patient and enhances their understanding that the HCP is giving them the best possible drug that is going to work for them.

The anticoagulation service aims to increase patient involvement by clearly explaining the condition and the pros and cons of treatment to the patient and clarifying what the patient

hopes the treatment will achieve. In addition, talking and listening to the patient rather than making assumptions about the patient's preferences on treatment and helping patients to make decisions based on likely benefits and risks rather than misconceptions also contribute to higher levels of adherence.

The service is committed to continued success and high standards based on the following foundations:

- Adopting a safety culture
- Trained, competent professionals, supervised until competence is achieved
- Implementing policies, protocols and guidelines
- Auditing the process, investigating any adverse events and quickly learning from mistakes
- Revising guidelines and protocols in order to achieve safety and gold standards