

Initiating Anticoagulant Therapy: Responsibilities of Initiating Medical Practitioner

1. Counsel patient regarding the diagnosis and reason for starting anticoagulant therapy

Patients and carers need to receive adequate verbal and written information about their treatment. This information should be provided before the first dose of anticoagulant is administered. It should be explained to the patient that anticoagulant therapy requires regular monitoring to ensure that it is safe and effective. It should be recorded in the patient's healthcare record that this information has been provided.

2. Prescribe an initial supply of anticoagulant therapy

Patients should be initially prescribed a supply of 1mg warfarin tablets until the regular maintenance dose that the patient needs has been ascertained. A patient-held yellow information booklet will be issued at the first anticoagulant clinic appointment.

3. Review all medication for clinically significant interactions with anticoagulants and take any necessary action

If the patient has previously been prescribed antiplatelet therapy on commencement of anticoagulants this should be reviewed and either stopped or instructions issued to the Gateshead Anticoagulant Service to stop antiplatelet therapy when anticoagulant therapy becomes therapeutic. If there is a rare need to continue both an antiplatelet and anticoagulant on a long term basis then this clearly needs to be communicated to the Gateshead Anticoagulant Service stating the reasons for this co-prescription. The Gateshead Anticoagulant Service should always be informed if the patient is taking any medication with clinically significant drug interactions with anticoagulant therapy.

4. Ensure that the patient is referred to the anticoagulant monitoring service

Primary Care

These patients should be referred to Gateshead Anticoagulant Service by the initiating GP using the standard referral form available from Pharmacy Department.

5. Ensure that an initial appointment for monitoring is arranged and the patient informed

The timing of the appointment will depend on the diagnosis and initial dosing of anticoagulant. For out-patients started on a slow start regime it is usually only necessary to arrange a follow up within the first week of therapy by contacting the Gateshead Anticoagulant Service. All initial appointments must be made by contacting the pharmacy department and not with community clinics. This is to ensure that patients are not lost to follow up or arrive at clinics without being referred. Only patients referred to the Gateshead Anticoagulant Service can be dosed at clinics.