

**Medicines Safety Advice**



To: General Practitioners  
Community Pharmacists  
Non-Medical Prescribers

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Directorate of Integrated Care  
12-22 Linenhall Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8BS

Tel : 028 9536 3926  
Fax : 028 9536 3126  
[www.hscboard.hscni.net](http://www.hscboard.hscni.net)

Dear Colleague

**Re: Incidents involving newer oral anticoagulant (NOAC) dosing**

There have been a number of reports recently involving incorrect dosing for the oral anticoagulant rivaroxaban (Xarelto<sup>®</sup>) **when prescribed for the treatment of deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolus in adults.**

The rivaroxaban dosing schedule for this indication is: <sup>1</sup>

- **15mg twice daily** with food for **21 days** followed by
- **20mg once daily** with food as continued treatment and prophylaxis of recurrent DVT/PE. (Dose reduction to 15mg daily may apply e.g. if creatinine clearance is 15 – 49 mL/min)

The duration of continued treatment (minimum 3 months) will depend on individual risk assessment e.g. transient or permanent risk factors for recurrent DVT/PE and risk of bleeding (see BNF for full details)

A number of incidents have been reported where the initial 15mg BD dose was continued beyond the 21 days following discharge from hospital, in one case for 11 months. **Continued treatment with what is effectively a doubling of dose presents a significant risk to patients.**

Factors contributing to the incidents:

- Healthcare staff were unfamiliar with the rivaroxaban dosing schedule used in the treatment of DVT/PE
- Discharge information was unclear about when rivaroxaban had been initiated, when the 21 day period ended and how long anticoagulant therapy should be continued for.

Trusts are currently implementing changes to their discharge procedures in relation to these issues by:

- Providing sufficient rivaroxaban on discharge to cover the initial 21 day BD dose period (as part of the 28 day discharge supply\*)
- Ensuring that the relevant dates for initiation, completion of the BD dose phase and the duration of treatment for DVT/PE e.g. 3 months or lifelong, are noted on the patient's discharge information

**This type of incident is also possible with apixaban (Eliquis<sup>®</sup>), which has a similar BD dosing schedule during initial treatment for this indication (NICE approval for treatment DVT/PE due later in 2015). See BNF for further details.**

### Recommendations & Actions:

- GPs should ensure that:
  - The initial rivaroxaban 15mg BD dose is not continued beyond the initial 21 day period (consider adding an alert to the clinical system to highlight this)
  - Patients commenced on an oral anticoagulant for the treatment of DVT/PE are reviewed as soon as possible post discharge
  - The duration of treatment and where appropriate a stop date is clearly recorded
  - Patients should be reviewed at appropriate intervals to ensure that treatment duration has not been exceeded
- Community pharmacists should contact the prescriber directly to query any BD doses of rivaroxaban that appear to be prescribed beyond the initial 21 day period
- GPs and community pharmacists should ensure that all relevant staff are made aware of this issue.

If you have any queries regarding this letter, please contact your local Medicines Governance Adviser or Medicines Management Adviser.

Yours sincerely,



Joe Brogan  
Asst Director Integrated Care  
Head of Pharmacy and  
Medicines Management



Dr Margaret O'Brien  
Asst Director Integrated Care  
Head of GMS

\*Exceptions apply as per local Trust Policy

<sup>1</sup>eBNF [www.medicinescomplete.com](http://www.medicinescomplete.com)