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| **Module** | Anticoagulation management: patient’s guide to self-monitoring |
| **Topic** | Introduction to patient self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation |
| **Audience** | Self-monitoring warfarin patient |
| **Content** | Core content |
| **Version** | 6 |

**1. What should I learn from this topic?**

The aim of this topic is to give you a greater understanding of patient self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation (warfarin treatment).

By the end of this topic you should be able to do the following:

1. Describe self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation
2. Describe the differences between self-testing and self-management
3. Summarise the benefits of self-monitoring
4. Assess if self-monitoring may be right for you

**2. Check my understanding**

However, you may know much of this information already. Therefore, please try to answer the following questions *(correct responses bolded)*.

a) Patient self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation can be described as the follows: (Please select the response that you think best answers this question)

i) It is when I visit the anticoagulant clinic and I suggest the dose of warfarin I think I should take

**ii) It is when I measure my INR from a small drop of blood at a location convenient to me, using a device called a coagulometer**

iii) It is when I check myself carefully for signs of bruising or bleeding from warfarin

b) If I am self-testing my oral anticoagulation I can alter the dose of warfarin myself?

True / **False**

c) If I am self-managing my oral anticoagulation I can alter the dose of warfarin myself?

**True** / False

d) Below is a list of possible benefits that might come from self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation. Please select ALL of those that are true.

**Less risk of having a blood clot**

**Less risk of having a minor bleed**

Less tiredness

**Provide reassurance that the INR is in therapeutic range**

**May be more convenient**

**Reduction in daily ‘hassles’**

**Greater confidence in tackling health-related problems**

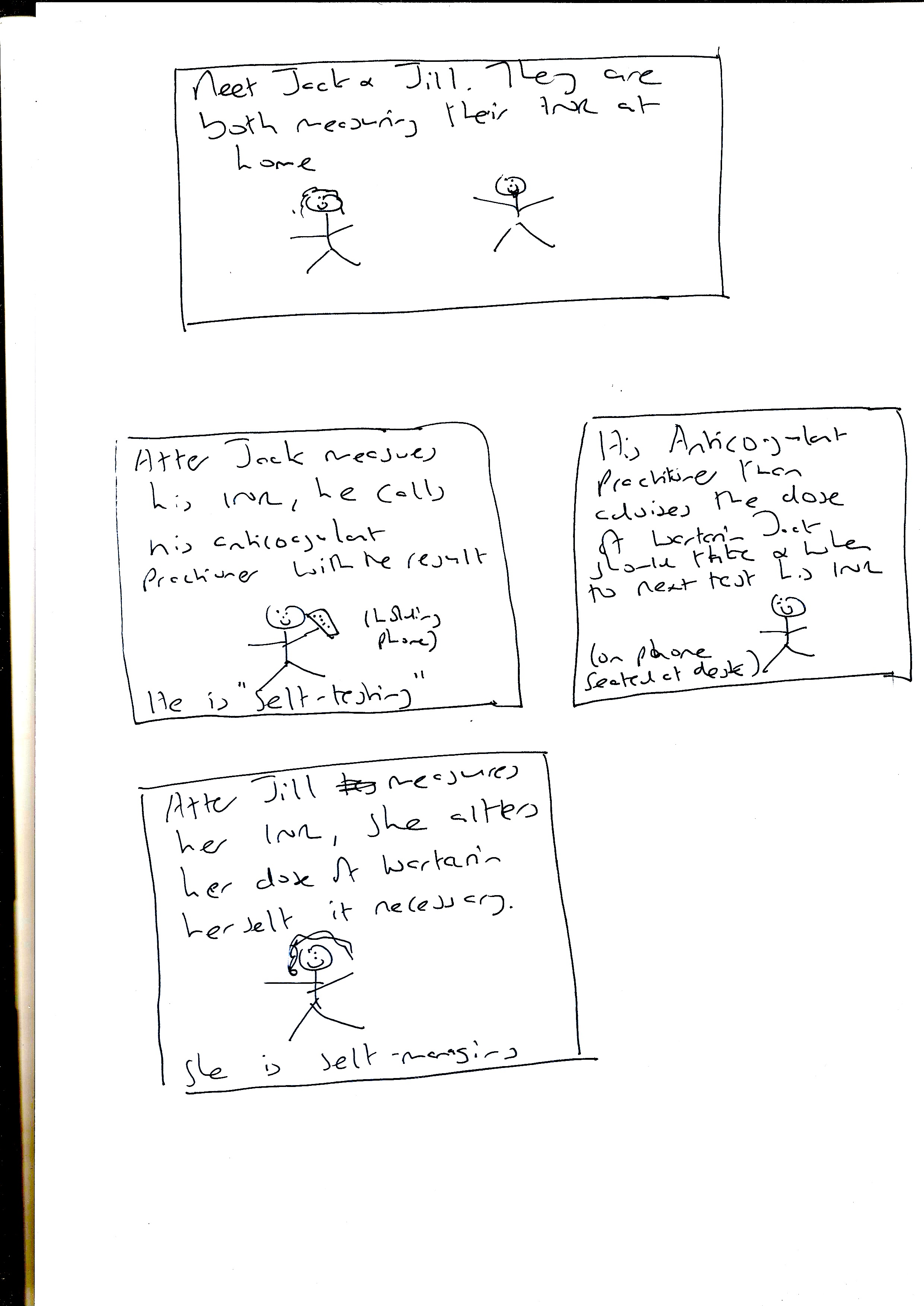
**3. What is patient self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation?**

Those treated with insulin for diabetes have been testing their blood glucose at home for some years. Their dose of insulin is then adjusted based on this test result. In a similar way, home monitoring of the INR is now possible.

Point-of-care testing (POCT) devices known as coagulometers are used to measure these INR from a small drop of blood from the finger (‘fingerprick’). These POCT devices are often used in anticoagulant clinics. However, they can also be used for testing your INR at home, or at another location convenient to you. This is known as patient self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation. People are monitoring their own INR in many countries around the world, including the UK.

If you would like to know a little bit more about where people are monitoring their own INR, please click here *[ to extra content doc]*

Therefore, instead of visiting your anticoagulant clinic for an INR blood test, it is possible for you to measure your INR on a coagulometer at a location convenient to you. After measuring your INR, you will then either seek dosing advice from a healthcare professional (patient self-testing). Alternatively, you can decide on your dose of warfarin based on personal experience, and supported by written or computerised guidance (patient self-management). These ways of managing your oral anticoagulation are illustrated in the following short animation *[optional content].*



In summary:

**Patient self-monitoring.** This is an all-embracing term, suggesting that you measure your INR with a POCT device. When self-monitoring, you can then either self-test or self-manage.

**Patient self-testing (PST).** You measure your own INR, but a healthcare professional will advise you on the dose of warfarin to take.

**Patient self-management (PSM)**. You measure your INR and then interpret the result, altering your warfarin dose as necessary.

**4. Is patient self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation safe?**

Published evidence tells us that self-monitoring your oral anticoagulation is at least as safe as having your INR blood test monitored in an anticoagulant clinic (‘conventional care’). The INR control of those who were self-monitoring was at least as good as, if not better than, the INRs of those attending an anticoagulant clinic. Those who were self-monitoring their INR were less likely to have a blood clot, and also less likely to suffer from a minor bleed.

If you would like to know a little bit more about the studies that have looked at the safety of patient self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation, please click here *[ to extra content doc]*

**5. Are there other benefits of patient self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation?**

There may be other advantages in self-monitoring your INR in addition to these clinical benefits.

Published studiesare few but do suggest the following benefits:

1. Reduction in “daily hassles”. These “daily hassles” were minor, stressful events
2. Greater confidence in tackling healthcare-related problems. This is known as improved self-efficacy.

More information on the benefits of self-monitoring is available from unpublished work:

* Greater convenience. For some people, self-monitoring gives them the freedom to travel or spend lengthy periods overseas. For others it simply frees them from attending the anticoagulant clinic.
* The reassurance of being able to check your INR when concerned
* The ability to be able to take more control over their health.
* As a welcome alternative taking a sample of blood from the arm (venous sample). For some people, a venous sample is not possible or desirable.

**ACTIVITY 1**

Now take a look at this video where someone who is self-monitoring her oral anticoagulation describes her experience.

*http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu553aCUh7o&list=PLkKsqqBKDBzDV\_\_r6LLUBNkvfeXVgPbZ4*

**6. Is self-monitoring suitable for me?**

Self-monitoring may be suitable for you if you:

1. Are on long-term warfarin treatment
2. Want to play a more active role in managing your health
3. Are able to perform a fingerprick test (or have someone – a carer, relative or friend – who would be able to do this for you)
4. Prefer not to travel to, or find it difficult to attend, the anticoagulant clinic
5. Have a GP and anticoagulation practitioner who are happy to support you self-testing

You may have to buy the coagulometer and, in some areas, the INR testing strips used with the coagulometer are not available on prescription. The coagulometer currently costs £299. The funding of both the coagulometer and the testing strips in the UK is currently being assessed and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) have been asked to decide if the coagulometer and testing strips should be universally available on the NHS. A decision is expected in July 2014.

It is important that you check the current funding arrangements near you with your anticoagulation professional and GP .

**ACTIVITY 2**

You should now know a little bit more about self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation, including its potential benefits. At this stage, do you think that it is suitable for you? Why do you think that it is / is not suitable for you?

*[‘vote’ via choice function]*

**7. Sources of additional information**

After reading this topic, you may have some questions about self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation. Your anticoagulation practitioner or GP should be able to answer your questions. There are also some excellent on-line resources for those considering self-monitoring, a few of which are listed below.

**Anticoagulation Europe (ACE)**

[*http://www.anticoagulationeurope.org]*

ACE is a UK registered charity that provides information, education and support to those taking anticoagulation. One of its key activities is supporting people to take a more active part in their own healthcare, including self-monitoring.

**Atrial Fibrillation Association (AFA)**

*[http://www.atrialfibrillation.org.uk]*

AFA is an international charity that provides information, support and access to established, new or innovative treatments for Atrial Fibrillation (AF), including self-monitoring of oral anticoagulation.

**DEMONSTRATE MY UNDERSTANDING**

Finally, please try to answer the questions at the start of this topic again