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| **Module** | Anticoagulation management: patient’s guide to self-monitoring |
| **Topic** | Getting the best out of the consultation with your anticoagulation practitioner |
| **Audience** | Self-monitoring warfarin patient |
| **Type** | Core content |
| **Version** | 3 |

**Introduction**

It is important that you are able to speak openly to your anticoagulation practitioner to get the best out of your treatment. It is also important to know which pieces of information may be useful to your practitioner during this discussion to manage your treatment safely. The aim of this topic is to help you get the best out of your consultation with your anticoagulation practitioner.

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

1. Describe how to prepare for your anticoagulation consultation
2. Give a few examples of information you should give your anticoagulation practitioner during consultation
3. Summarise any actions you should take after the anticoagulation consultation

**POINTS TO PONDER ….**

Can you think of a time when you wished that you had a more satisfactory consultation with your anticoagulation practitioner? Could you have done anything to help make this a better experience?

**How should I prepare for my consultation?**

* Between your INR tests it is important to keep a record of factors that may have affected your test result.
* Of course this can be kept in your head, but it is better if you keep a written record – in a diary, for example – or an electronic record.
* The things you should be recording are listed in the checklist below
* It is also helpful if you write down any questions you may have.
* Changes in any long-term condition you may have
* Acute illness (for example, cold, ‘flu, diarrhoea, vomiting)
* Changes in your medication, including that bought from a chemist of supermarket
* Any changes in your diet
* Missed any doses of warfarin
* Evidence of bruising or bleeding or headaches

**A checklist of factors that can affect your INR *(can this text be placed on a background of a clipboard?)***

**REFRESH MY MEMORY …**

If you would like to take another look at the factors that can affect your INR please *-> link to topic*

**Top tips for the consultation**

If you are testing your own INR at home, you will be discussing your INR result with your anticoagulation practitioner in one of a few different ways:

* over the telephone
* by email
* transferred electronically (‘on-line’)

What is essential is that you carefully check and record your INR before clearly communicating it to your anticoagulation practitioner.

Regardless of the way in which you are communicating with your anticoagulation practitioner, it is important that this discussion gives both you and your practitioner enough information to safely manage your treatment. Here are some ‘top tips’…

* Inform your practitioner of any changes that could have affected your INR, even if your INR is in the correct range for you (Box A)
* It is essential that you let your practitioner know if you have missed any doses of warfarin
* Ensure that you understand what dose of warfarin you should be taking and when you should next test your INR.
* If your practitioner says something that you do not understand, ask them to explain it to you. For example, ‘Can you say that again?’ or ‘I do not understand.’
* If you find it hard to communicate, have someone at hand – a carer, friend or family member – who can help.
* Tell your anticoagulation practitioner if you have experienced any bruising, bleeding, headaches or falls
* Do let your anticoagulation practitioner know if you have any surgery planned, including dental surgery

**‘Top tips’ for your anticoagulation consultation**

**What should I do after my consultation?**

After your consultation, you should:

* write down what was discussed
* put the date of your next INR test in your diary
* take the dose of warfarin as agreed

If you have any remaining questions, you should not hesitate to contact your anticoagulation practitioner again. You should also contact your practitioner if you experience any problems relating to your warfarin before your next INR test.

**What should I do if I am not happy with the consultation?**

In the first instance, you should discuss your concerns with your anticoagulation practitioner. Speaking directly to the people caring for you is often the best option.

If this does not address your concerns, for hospital clinics their PALS (Patient Advocacy and Liaison Service) should be able to investigate your concerns and sort out any problems. Alternatively, you can speak to your GP.