Oral Anticoagulant Prescribing Practices for Atrial Fibrillation Among Internists and Cardiologists

The Problem
Vitamin K antagonists, direct thrombin inhibitors, and direct factor Xa inhibitors are commonly prescribed for prevention of ischemic stroke and systemic embolism for patients with atrial fibrillation. However, the selection of anticoagulation medication involves a complex estimation of the benefit-risk ratio of individual agents. We suspect that Internal Medicine physicians and Cardiologists, the majority of physicians prescribing these medications, may select medications based on misleading marketing information or limited awareness of the clinical trial data for new oral anticoagulants and reversal of anticoagulation-related hemorrhage. We hope that improvement in education regarding anticoagulant selection and treatment of anticoagulation-related hemorrhage will result in better-informed medical decision making (with more effective and safer anticoagulation prescribing practices).

Aim/Goal
We sought to assess clinical knowledge and decision making related to anticoagulant therapies among Internal Medicine physicians and Cardiologists in academic and community based practices. We sought to identify areas of knowledge deficits that could be targets for focused educational efforts.

The Team
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The Interventions
• Online survey of the Internal Medicine department and Cardiology division at BIDMC, including Internists in community-based practices and hospitalists
• Plan to prepare educational initiative for Internists and Cardiologists

The Results
The online survey had a total of 64 respondents including 27 PCPs in an academic center, 20 PCPs in a community setting, 11 Cardiologists in an academic center, and 6 hospitalists.

Lessons Learned
There are gaps in knowledge regarding the efficacy of novel oral anticoagulants and the specific benefits of these medications.

Next Steps/What Should Happen Next
We will pursue an interdepartmental collaboration to improve education on anticoagulant selection.