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The introduction and evaluation of a warfarin management strategy into Illawarra residential aged care facilities

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Title: Evaluating the Implementation of a Warfarin-Specific Medication Chart in Residential Aged Care Facilities

Background: Preliminary research conducted locally highlighted barriers to safe use of warfarin in the frail older population in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) due to logistical and communication difficulties, as well as patient selection. One recommendation was to formulate and trial a standardised warfarin-specific medication chart which could function as a prescription, monitoring and administration record.

Research design: A warfarin-specific medication chart was inductively developed with those involved in warfarin management. Ethics approval was gained for the introduction of a warfarin-management strategy for high-level care residents of participating local RACFs. General Practitioners (GPs) and residents (or their nominated person) provided consent. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected for evaluation purposes.

Results: Eleven interactive education sessions were held for 56 nurses involved in warfarin management. The strategy was trialled in 3 RACFs for 23 residents for 3 months. Qualitative evaluation was by semi-structured interviews. Compared to previous methods, 8 of 9 GPs found the charts easier to prescribe warfarin; 100% found that communication was enhanced, the chart easy to use and time-saving. Six out of 12 (50%) Registered Nurses found the charts enhanced communication, saved time, and provided more information than previous methods. Ten of 11 RNs found the dose easier to find and the charts easy to use. All GPs and RNs (100%) recommended adopting the strategy in their RACFs.

Conclusions: Barriers exist to quality warfarin management in RACFs. The introduction of this novel warfarin-management strategy has the potential to enhance warfarin safety and has gained approval by those responsible for warfarin management with recommendations for wider adoption.

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