



Practice sting 2021-21

Practice sting Antithrombotics and neuraxis blockage

A neuraxis blockage is a procedure with a high risk of bleedings. Bleeding can cause complications. The severity of the complications depends on the location of the bleeding and on the possible use of antithrombotics. The *Neuraxis Blockage and Anticoagulation Guideline* (NVA, 2014) makes recommendations regarding the use of antithrombotics before, during and after a neuraxis blockage. Notwithstanding, incidents are regularly reported on this subject. In the period June 2015 to December 2019, the Patient Safety Portal, the predecessor of VMI, received 204 reports on this subject.

Causes and consequences of the incidents

Ninety percent of the incidents with antithrombotics in neuraxis blockages are related to prescribing policy and administration of medicines. The other ten percent revolves around medication transfer. In a significant proportion of the incidents, the time period within which an antithrombotic drug is not recommended for neuraxis blockage was not taken into account. This means, for example, that an antithrombotic was stopped too late prior to a neuraxis blockage, started too early after a neuraxis blockage, or was administered during a neuraxis blockage.

Regarding a quarter of the incidents temporary consequences for the patient were reported, such as having an epidural catheter in place for a longer period of time. This is associated with an increased risk of infection and prolonged hospitalization. Other consequences were the need to put the patient under general anesthesia instead of epidural neuraxis blockage, postponement of the planned procedure and inadequate pain relief.

Recommendations

For people within the hospital with focus area anticoagulation:

- Ensure that the *Neuraxis Blockage and Anticoagulation Guideline* (NVA, 2014) is properly implemented in the hospital.
- Ensure timely medication verification in patients undergoing neuraxis blockage, so that any necessary adjustments in antithrombotic use can be made, if necessary.
- Ensure that the neuraxis blockage is clearly stated in the patient file.

Source

Dutch Society for Anesthesiology. Guideline Neuraxis Blockage and Anticoagulation. Utrecht: NVA, 2014.