



## Practice sting 2023-06

### Practice sting Confusing anticoagulation advice before surgery

VMI regularly receives notifications of conflicting advice to patients regarding anticoagulation management before surgery. This increases the surgical risk. It can also lead to postponement of surgery. The notifications below are examples of conflicting advice.

#### Notifications

1. A patient is scheduled for a total gastric resection. He uses clopidogrel and apixaban. The surgeon arranges for the patient to discontinue clopidogrel during 7 days and apixaban during 1 day before surgery. However, during preoperative screening, the patient is advised to discontinue apixaban 2 days before surgery. No advice on clopidogrel has been given. The patient uses clopidogrel until the day of surgery. In the end, the operation went ahead despite an increased risk of bleeding. Scheduling an surgery of this magnitude was not possible in the short term and postponing the surgery was not desirable from an oncological point of view.
2. A patient is already lying on the operating table when it becomes clear that the anaesthetist did not inform the patient to stop using clopidogrel. The surgeon decides to postpone the operation. The nurse who conducts the admission interview a week later for the new surgery assumes that the patient may continue the clopidogrel. To add to the confusion, the patient appears to have received two letters in the previous week. One states that he may continue to take the clopidogrel, the other that he must discontinue the clopidogrel 5 days before surgery. The family has contacted the surgeon about this. Finally, the patient stopped taking clopidogrel 7 days before surgery.

#### Recommendations

##### For the committee dealing with anticoagulation

- Discuss these incidents in your hospital. Possible discussion points are:
  - Does this type of incident occur in your hospital?
  - Do you have arrangements within your hospital about responsibility for the preoperative anticoagulation policy?
  - If so, who is responsible for this policy?
  - How do you coordinate and communicate with the prescriber of the anticoagulants?
  - Who communicates the preoperative anticoagulant arrangements to the other care providers involved and how is this done?
  - Who communicates the preoperative anticoagulant arrangements to the patient and how is this done?
- If necessary, bring the arrangements – together with the reports – to the attention of the care providers involved.