

## **Basic knowledge of oral anticoagulant therapy**

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**Introduction:** Most patients with atrial fibrillation need life-long thromboprophylaxis, principally with oral vitamin K antagonists. Treatment is safe and effective only with therapeutic INR (International-Normalized-Ratio) of 2.0-3.0, which requires regular blood sampling for monitoring and may reduce the patient's quality of life. Patients' understanding of the treatment principles strongly influences their compliance and treatment effects.

**Aim:** We aimed to assess whether patients understand the principles of oral anticoagulation (OAC) therapy and whether such treatment affects their quality of life.

**Methods:** In this observational study we prospectively enrolled patients with AF treated at the Clinical Center of Serbia, who voluntarily agreed to complete a questionnaire assessing the understanding of the principles of OAC therapy, knowledge of thromboembolic and hemorrhagic risk and satisfaction with oral anticoagulant therapy.

**Results:** Of 100 consecutive AF patients (mean age 65.0±8.5 years, men 66%), 92% confirmed that they understood the importance of the OAC implementation, but only 59% correctly identified the therapeutic INR range. Most patients tended to underestimate the thromboembolic risk, rating their own risk as low (45%) or moderate (37%), while 49% expressed concern about the increased hemorrhagic risk. A third of patients stated that OAC reduced their quality of life mostly due to the INR control.

**Conclusion:** Most AF patients understand the importance of OAC, but they are not sufficiently familiar with the INR therapeutic range. One third of patients considered that AF reduced their quality of life. These results emphasize the need for better education of patients and support in relation to OAC therapy.

**Keywords:** atrial fibrillation, oral anticoagulation therapy, quality of life, quality of health care