

# Survey of atrial fibrillation patients demonstrates gaps in awareness of stroke risk and perceived barriers associated with anticoagulation therapy

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## Background

- An estimated 2.6 million people in the U.S. are affected by atrial fibrillation (AF), and its public health impact will grow as up to 12 million people are projected to have the condition by 2050.<sup>1</sup>
- AF patients have a five-fold increased risk for ischemic stroke. AF mortality rates, as a primary or underlying cause of death, have increased in the past two decades.<sup>1</sup>

## Objectives

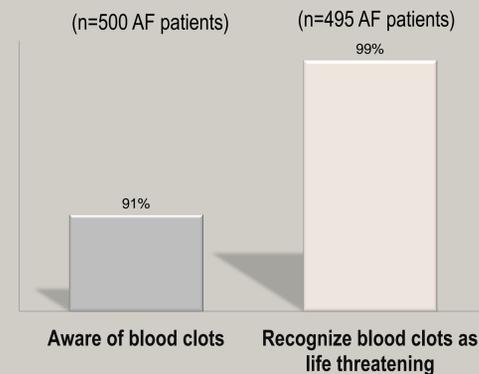
- The National Blood Clot Alliance (NBCA), a patient-led advocacy organization, implemented this survey to assess the hypothesis that there are gaps in:
  - AF patient awareness of blood clot and stroke risk
  - The use of evidence-based prophylaxis to prevent blood clots that cause stroke.

## Methods

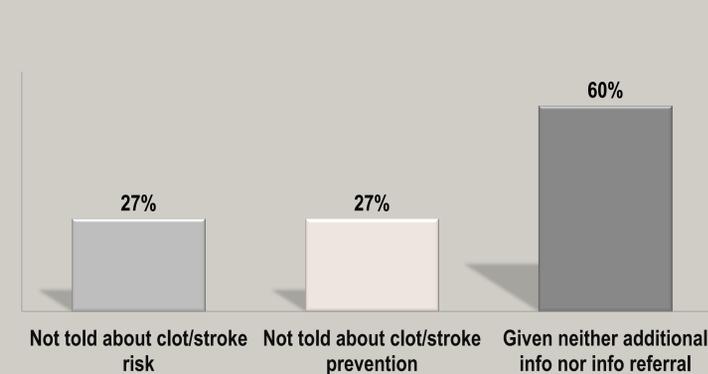
- A nationally representative online or Internet survey of 500 AF patients was conducted to:
  - Measure AF patient awareness of blood clot and stroke risk
  - Assess patient-reported experiences with anticoagulation therapy.
- Mean patient age: 57.93 (4% aged 20-39, 82% aged 40-69, 14% aged 70-80+); 53% female.

## Results

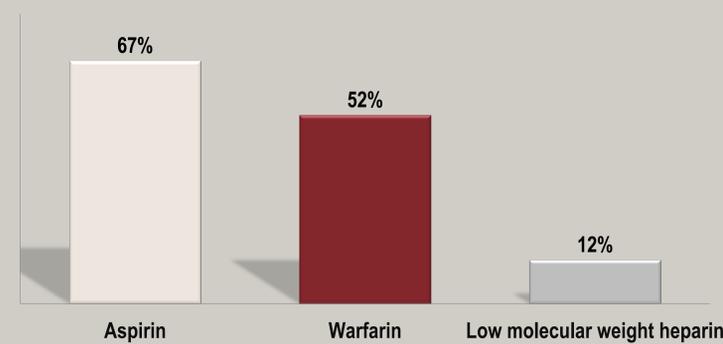
### 1. Awareness of Blood Clots (n=500 AF patients)



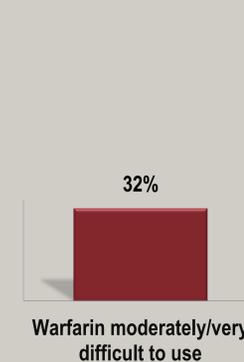
### 2. Risk Awareness, Information Sharing (n=500 AF patients)



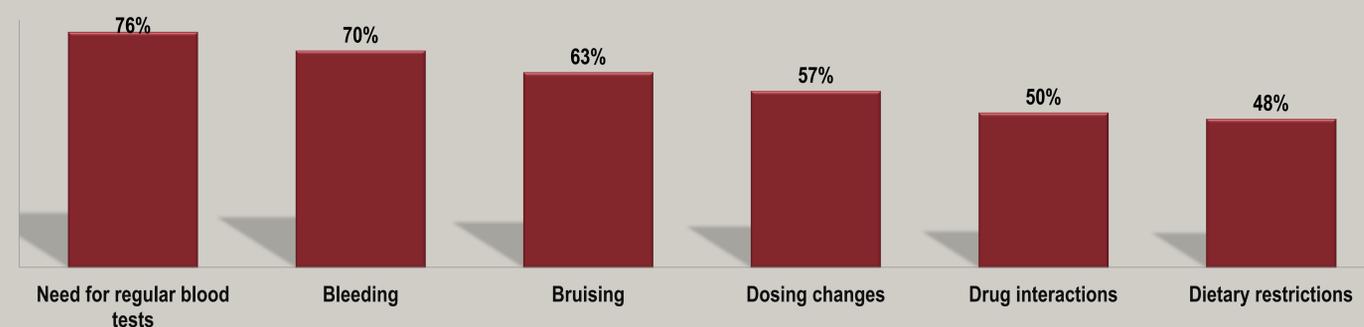
### 3. Blood Clot Prevention (n=500 AF patients)



### 4. Difficulty of Use: Warfarin (n=259 AF patients prescribed warfarin)



### 5. Patient-Reported Treatment Barriers: Warfarin (n=84 AF patients prescribed warfarin who report it is moderately/very difficult to use)



## Conclusion

- Majority of 500 AF patients surveyed (91%) said they know what a blood clot is, and virtually all of these respondents (99%) recognize blood clots as life threatening.
- More than 1/4 of all patients surveyed (27%) said they were not told by doctor or other health care professional about a) blood clot/stroke risk due to AF and b) blood clot/stroke prevention. Most AF patients surveyed (60%) said they were given neither additional information nor referred to other info sources about blood clots/stroke.
- Aspirin was reported by 333 AF patients as the most widely used (67%) treatment for the prevention of blood clots. Just more than half (52%) or 259 respondents said they were given warfarin therapy, and 12% or 59 patients said they were given LMWH.
- Among warfarin users surveyed (n=259), nearly 1/3 (32%) said the therapy was moderately/very difficult to use and cited warfarin treatment barriers as: need for regular blood tests (76%), bleeding (70%), bruising (63%), dosing changes (57%), drug interactions (50%), dietary restrictions (48%).

## Future Directions

- Opportunities exist for improved patient education, and interventions are needed to fill awareness gaps among AF patients about blood clot formation and stroke risk.
- Patients should be educated to understand all anticoagulation treatment options.
- New therapies to reduce or minimize barriers should be researched.

## References

<sup>1</sup>. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Atrial Fibrillation Fact Sheet*, February 2010