

Synovate Healthcare Study Of Atrial Fibrillation Patients Shows Lack Of Awareness Of New Medications

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...and high costs as main barriers to better treatment

Synovate Healthcare, the healthcare specialist division of top four global custom market research firm Synovate, today released results from a new study with atrial fibrillation patients on their satisfaction and challenges with their current treatment as well their awareness of new options, likelihood to adopt them and their sources of information on treatment.

Atrial fibrillation (A-fib) is a cardiac arrhythmia, and patients may require anticoagulation treatment as they can be at risk of developing a stroke.

Until recently, A-fib patients only had one primary anticoagulant option, vitamin K agonists (VKAs), which have a number of side effects and require regular monitoring to ensure the correct dose. In late 2010, a new direct thrombin inhibitor was approved in the US for stroke prevention in A-fib patients.

It offers several benefits, including removing the need for repeated blood tests and specific dietary requirements. However, it is relatively more expensive. There are also other new classes of anticoagulants in late stage development that have the potential to provide similar advantages.

Synovate Healthcare's study findings show the vast majority of A-fib patients surveyed are currently taking a VKA and are highly satisfied with this treatment, feeling that it's working well for them.

However two-thirds noted that the need for constant monitoring was a challenge, and 40% also cited the need for dose adjustments.

When respondents were asked to choose the top three characteristics that a new anticoagulant should have, 77% said no need for monitoring and 61% said it needed to be covered by insurance or have an affordable co-pay.

Just under half of patients on a VKA were aware of new options for stroke prevention. They had primarily heard about them from TV advertising rather than through their physician.

However, less than half of those aware of a new option have discussed it with their physician. Among those who have, three in four patients do not intend to switch treatments in the next six months, primarily because of cost.

"This study shows that A-fib patients are generally not aware of new treatments or their benefits," said Nicholas Bawden, Research Director for Synovate Healthcare. "While many are happy with VKAs overall, the higher cost of improved treatments is a big barrier for them and may outweigh any possible improvements in their quality of life.

"Synovate Healthcare will be expanding this study to include Europe and Japan, so we can also assess the attitudes of A-fib patients in those countries towards treatment. We are also developing physician-based chart audit studies in atrial fibrillation and venous thromboembolism to capture the impact of the new anticoagulants as they are approved and launched," said Bawden.

About the study

The study was conducted online in May 2011 with 210 respondents aged 55 to 84 years old. Respondents were from Synovate's US consumer panel (a group that has opted in to take surveys) that currently suffer from atrial fibrillation and are taking anticoagulation treatment to prevent a stroke.

Those interested in purchasing the full study results should contact nicholas.bawden@synovate.com.

To download the survey questionnaire, [click here](#).

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