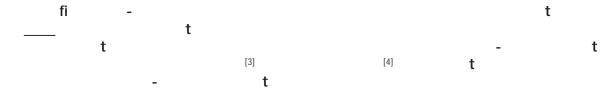
## Dear Colleague

On July 14th 2021, a National Patient Safety Alert was issued by NHS England relating to choice of anticoagulant drugs prescribed to patients with mechanical heart valves. [1] This was triggered by cases presenting to hospital of patients who had been switched from anticoagulation with warfarin to a novel oral anticoagulant (NOAC).

As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and the nat onal lockdown in 2020, some pat ents experienced significant diculty in continuing blood monitoring of the international normalised ratio (INR). Thus, guidance was provided for patients who could be safely switched from warfarin to newer oral ant coagulant drugs – this did <u>not</u> include patients with mechanical heart valves.<sup>[2]</sup>

The NPSA stated that fourteen pat ents with mechanical heart valves have been ident fied who had been switched from warfarin to alternative ant coagulant drugs – one pat ent was switched to a low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) and thirteen pat ents to a NOAC. On subsequent analysis of pat ent records in primary care, a further 750 pat ents have been identified who are coded as having a mechanical heart valve and prescribed a NOAC.



LMWH inject ons can be used as an alternative to warfarin in certain clinical set ings, under direct supervision of a responsible physician. As an example, patients with a mechanical valve who are pregnant or who have scheduled surgery may receive LMWH injections during a defined time period, after which warfarin therapy would be re-commenced.

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