



## Submission to the Department of Health and Ageing: February 2012

### RE: Review of Anticoagulation Therapies in Atrial Fibrillation

The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM – the College) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Department of Health and Ageing on the *Review of Anticoagulation Therapies in Atrial Fibrillation* as a follow up to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee recommendation that *Dabigatran* was suitable for inclusion on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for the prevention of stroke or embolism in certain groups of patients with atrial fibrillation.

ACEM is a not-for-profit organisation responsible for the training of emergency physicians and the maintenance of professional standards in emergency medicine in Australia and New Zealand. The College has a vital interest in the quality of emergency care provided to the community and strongly supports the introduction of evidence-based therapeutic options for improving the health outcomes of patients with atrial fibrillation.

ACEM accepts that dabigatran provides an alternative therapeutic option for patients with atrial fibrillation who require oral anticoagulants but are reluctant or unable to take warfarin. However, the College is aware of a number of anecdotal reports of patients presenting to Australian Emergency Departments with complications that may be attributed to the use of dabigatran, particularly bleeding-related adverse events.

The College is also concerned that inappropriate or unnecessary prescribing of this new therapeutic option for patients with atrial fibrillation may contribute to adverse events.

The health outcomes from the use of dabigatran and other oral anticoagulants in patients with atrial fibrillation, particularly adverse bleeding-related complications, has yet to be analysed in a comprehensive or systematic manner in order to provide an evidence-base for the optimal use of this therapy. The College strongly recommends that the Department of Health and Ageing undertake a population-based research program to address this important question. The College would welcome the opportunity to partner in this research activity.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a submission to the *Review of Anticoagulation Therapies in Atrial Fibrillation*. If you require any clarification or related information, please do not hesitate to contact the ACEM Director of Policy and Research, Dr Andrew Gosbell (03 9320 0412 or [andrew.gosbell@acem.org.au](mailto:andrew.gosbell@acem.org.au)).

Kind regards

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