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Patient education and anticoagulation therapy in a cardiac population

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Anticoagulation therapy is a prevalent and effective treatment for the prevention of stroke and other complications resulting from many cardiac conditions. Unfortunately, management of anticoagulation therapy is difficult, and mismanagement can have severe, adverse effects. In addition, inadequate health literacy is a prevalent issue and a barrier to patient education in the United States. The purpose of this research study was to examine health literacy and patient knowledge as they relate to anticoagulation therapy in a cardiac population. This pilot study used a prospective, descriptive design to assess the knowledge of anticoagulation therapy of participants ($n=35$) and their health literacy using a questionnaire that included the Brief Health Literacy Screening Tool. Results of the study demonstrated that 35% of the patients had inadequate or marginal health literacy despite the fact that 60% of the participants had education past high school/GED; next, the overall knowledge of patients was low (63%) even though 88.6% of the patients reported receiving instruction regarding anticoagulation therapy from their healthcare provider; and although patients reported learning from printed materials, the low health literacy and low reported knowledge indicate these methods were ineffective for patient education. The results of this study demonstrate that among patients with a cardiac condition on anticoagulation therapy, patient education has the potential to improve knowledge, but only if the education is targeted to the learning styles and educational needs of patients throughout therapy.

Biography

Katie Kok is currently a graduate nursing student at Millikin University School of Nursing in Decatur, Illinois and will graduate in December 2014. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. While studying at Millikin University she became particularly interested in patient education and health literacy and the challenges patients face with adhering to treatment recommendations.

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