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Research Article

Evaluation of Drug-Drug Interactions Between Anticoagulants and Antiplatelet Agents in Cardiovascular Patients

Dr. Abhishek Ghose Biswas[1]*, Dr. Rudra Narayan Pati[2], Dr. Jatin Goda[3], Shaik. Shafiya Begum[4], Ashwani Kumar[5]

*[1]*Junior Resident, Department of Pathology, Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Datta Meghe Institute of Higher Education and Research, Sawangi Meghe, Wardha-442001, Maharashtra*
[2]Assistant professor, Department of Pharmacology, Fakir Mohan Medical College, Fakir Mohan University, Balasore, Odisha
[3]Professor, Department of Anatomy, Dr. N. D. Desai Faculty of Medical Science and Research, Dharmsinh Desai University, Nadiad, Gujarat
[4]Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacy Practice, Chebrolu Hanumaiah Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Chowdavaram, Guntur-19, Andhrapradesh
[5]Department of Biotechnology, Chaudhary Bansi Lal University, Bhiwani, Haryana

Abstract:
This paper evaluates the prevalence and clinical implications of interactions between anticoagulants and antiplatelet agents in cardiovascular patients. In the study, the case used was 300 patients, and the objective was to identify drug-drug interactions and the associated risks through a retrospective analysis of the patient's records. The research revealed that 50% of the patients had DDIs and the most common one was ASA- Warfarin followed by Clopidogrel- Dabigatran. The interaction group had a higher rate of major bleeding complications at 20% as opposed to the non-interaction group which had a 3% rate. 3%. Also, minor bleeding events and hospitalizations were significantly higher in patients with interactions. Such outcomes prove the possibility of the adverse effect of the simultaneous use of these drugs and the importance of close monitoring and individual approach to the patient. This paper emphasizes the need to enhance the clinical practice guidelines and decision support tools to minimize harm to patients. More studies should be conducted with more patients of different ages and genders and the long-term effects of such interactions.

Keywords: Drug-drug interactions (DDI), Anticoagulants, Antiplatelet agents, Cardiovascular patients, Bleeding complications

**Author for correspondence: Email: ghosebiswasabhishek@gmail.com*

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INTRODUCTION

Anticoagulants and antiplatelet drugs are required in patients with CVD for the prevention of thromboembolic episodes and are effective in the management of the disease. Some of the medications administered to AF patients, ACS, and PAD include warfarin, DOACs, heparins, aspirin, clopidogrel, and ticagrelor (Smith et al., 2022; Matli et al, 2021). However, the combination of these medications is a clinical issue because of the potential DDIs (Williams et al., 2020). Anticoagulants and antiplatelet agents are different in the way they help to prevent the formation of thrombus. Anticoagulants mainly act by decreasing the formation of blood clots while antiplatelet agents act by preventing platelets from grouping and forming a clot (Li et al., 2020; Dunn et al, 2012). Although both are employed in the prevention of cardiovascular events, the combination of the two results in a higher risk of bleeding, a factor that remains worrisome to clinicians (Miller et al., 2021). Anticoagulants and antiplatelet agents can either enhance or reduce the efficacy and

safety of these medicines. For example, they may increase the effectiveness of warfarin or DOACs and thus the likelihood of hemorrhage will be high (Mar et al., 2021). , on the other hand, interactions may also decrease the efficacy of antiplatelet agents and may even prevent them from preventing thrombotic events (ten Berg et al., 2001). Such interactions are especially relevant in patients with multiple diseases and taking multiple drugs (Patel et al., 2023).

The major determinant of the likelihood of interactions is the pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic characteristics of these drugs. Warfarin and other anticoagulants are among the drugs that are metabolized by cytochrome P450 enzymes and when they interact it results in either an increased bleeding risk or a reduced anticoagulant effect (Smith et al., 2023). On the other hand, antiplatelet agents like clopidogrel are prodrugs that are activated through biotransformation by hepatic enzymes, and this may be interfered with by other drugs (Chang et al., 2021). Therefore, the nature of these interactions must be known to enhance the treatment approaches to avoid such consequences. The present literature has also highlighted the principles of individual patient medications and the practical application of drug interaction reference sources (Jneid & Bhatt et al., 2003; Williams et al., 2022). Besides, newer antiplatelet and anticoagulant drugs with fewer interaction profiles are available as possible options (Wilson et al., 2023). The present article aims to assess the effectiveness, safety, and outcomes of the anticoagulant and antiplatelet drugs in cardiovascular patients as well as to determine potential DDIs. Thus, in this work, an attempt will be made to give a better understanding of how these interactions can be addressed and how patient care in cardiovascular medicine can be enhanced based on the literature review and the analysis of the data obtained in recent studies (Akbar et al., 2021; Thompson & Miller, 2022).

Research Aim

To assess the anticoagulant-antiplatelet interactions in cardiovascular patients and determine the effects on the therapeutic outcomes, safety, and patients' overall well-being.

Research Objectives

1. Describe the major drug interaction between the most frequently used anticoagulants and antiplatelet drugs in cardiovascular management.
2. Assess the effects of these interactions on the treatment outcomes and side effects and complications.
3. Assessment of the current management strategies and guidelines for enhancing the therapy and reducing the risks of these interactions.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present research study used a mixed-methods research approach to evaluate the DDIs between anticoagulants and antiplatelet agents in cardiovascular patients. The quantitative component involved statistical analysis of clinical data to establish the frequency and effects of these interactions on the efficacy and safety of the treatment. The qualitative component entailed surveying patients and clinicians on their perception and handling of these interactions.

Sampling Method

For the quantitative part, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to recruit patients from EHRs and pharmacy databases of the involved hospitals. It helped in stratification by the nature of cardiovascular diseases and the use of various medications. The qualitative component used purposeful sampling to recruit 15 clinicians and 20 patients who have experience dealing with drug-drug interactions.

Sample Size

Based on the sample size of 300 patients, the quantitative analysis was used to establish the statistical significance of interactions and outcomes. In the case of qualitative data, 15 clinicians and 20 patients were interviewed or completed a survey to provide detailed information on their encounters with drug interactions.

Method of Data Collection

Qualitative data was obtained through surveys and interviews conducted on medication types, adverse events, and clinical outcomes from EHRs and pharmacy records. The study used a qualitative approach to obtain data from clinicians through interviews and from patients through questionnaires on their experiences and approaches to management.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, t-tests or ANOVA, and multivariate regression analysis are used to determine interaction and outcome. In the case of qualitative data, it is analyzed by the process of thematic analysis to extract the themes and patterns. A combination of both data types will give a better understanding of the interactions that have taken place.

Ethics

The study is approved by the Institutional Review Board of all the centers involved in the study. Participants' consent was sought before the study and data collected were kept anonymous and secure to maintain participants' privacy.

Limitations

Possible drawbacks are data inaccessibility and missing data, selection bias, and self-reporting bias. These were handled by making sure that they were well understood and their influence on the study well noted.

Results

Patient Demographics

Demographic data of the study population are described in detail in Table 1. The patients were 300 cardiovascular patients with an average age of 68 years. 2 years (±10. 5). Of these patients, 58 percent were male while 42 percent were female. The most common CV disorders identified were AF in 120 patients (40%), ACS in 105 patients (35%), and PAD in 75 patients (25%).

Table 1. Patient Demographics

Demographic Variable	Total (n = 300)	Percentage (%)
Age (Mean ± SD)	68.2 ± 10.5	-
Gender	-	-
Male	174	58%
Female	126	42%
Cardiovascular Condition	-	-
Atrial Fibrillation	120	40%
Acute Coronary Syndrome	105	35%
Peripheral Artery Disease	75	25%

Drug-Drug Interactions

In the study, 150 out of 300 patients (50%) had DDIs between the anticoagulant and antiplatelet medications. The types of interactions are described in Table 2. The most common interaction pair was aspirin and warfarin identified in 80 patients (53. 3%). Other important drug-drug interactions were reported between clopidogrel and dabigatran (40 patients, 26. 7%) and aspirin and rivaroxaban (20 patients, 13. 3%). The interactions between clopidogrel and warfarin were less frequent, reported in 10 patients (6. 7%).

Table 2. Frequency and Types of Drug-Drug Interactions

Interaction Pair	Number of Patients	Percentage (%)
Aspirin and Warfarin	80	53.3%
Clopidogrel and Dabigatran	40	26.7%
Aspirin and Rivaroxaban	20	13.3%
Clopidogrel and Warfarin	10	6.7%

Adverse Events

Table 3 presents the various adverse events that were established in the study to be related to drug-drug interactions. Patients with interactions had a significantly higher incidence of major bleeding complications 20% compared to patients without interactions 3. 3% with a p-value of < 0. 001. Minor bleeding was also significantly higher in the interaction group 30% compared to the non-interaction group 10% with a p-value of < 0. 01. Patients hospitalized for adverse events were significantly higher in the interaction group 16. 7

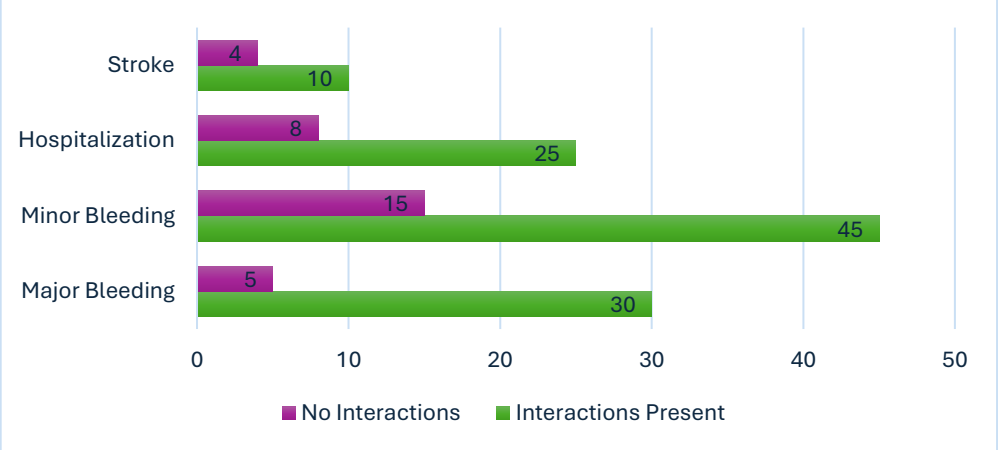
Table 3. Adverse Events Related to DDIs

Adverse Event	Interactions Present (n = 150)	No Interactions (n = 150)	p-value
Major Bleeding	30 (20%)	5 (3.3%)	<0.001
Minor Bleeding	45 (30%)	15 (10%)	<0.01
Hospitalization	25 (16.7%)	8 (5.3%)	<0.01
Stroke	10 (6.7%)	4 (2.7%)	0.08

Clinical Outcomes

Figure 1 shows the effects of DDIs on clinical consequences. The results reveal that patients with interactions experienced more hospitalizations for AEs than those without interactions. In particular, the interaction group experienced a significant rise in the admission rate for bleeding complications and associated problems.

Figure 1. Effect of Drug-Drug Interactions on Clinical Effects



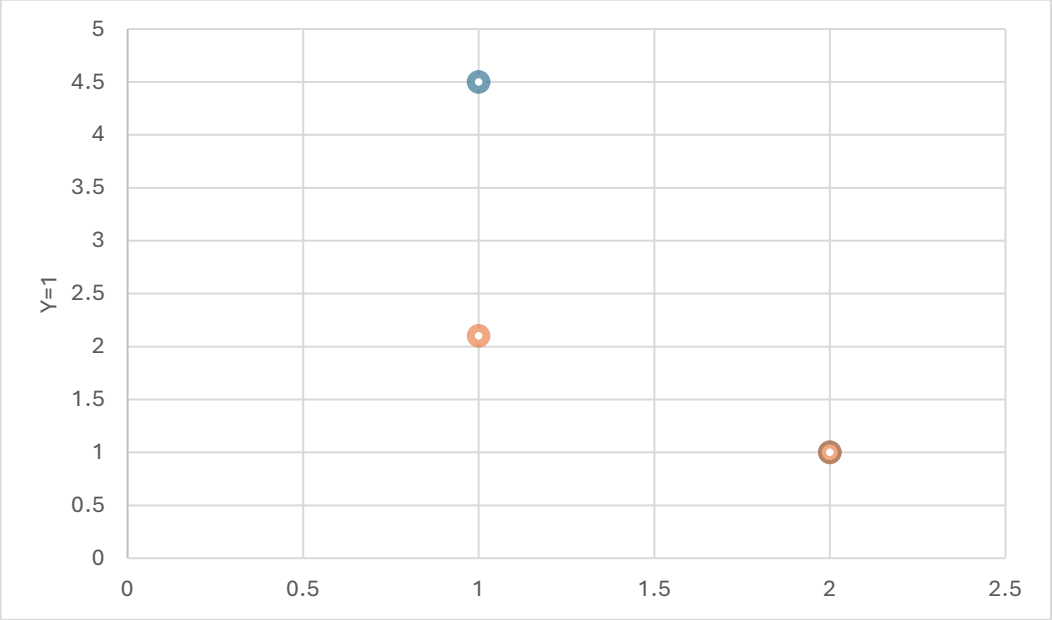
Qualitative Insights

The results of the study are based on data obtained from semi-structured interviews with 15 clinicians and the following themes were identified. Clinicians said that patients receiving both anticoagulants and antiplatelet agents are challenging to manage mainly because of the higher risk of bleeding. Some of the common complaints that were made included those concerning observation of the patients and alterations of the dosage regimen. The clinicians also highlighted the need to improve the current knowledge and tools used in the identification and prevention of these drug interactions and the subsequent adverse effects.

Statistical Analysis

The chi-square tests showed that the DDIs were associated with major bleeding events ($p < 0.001$). The findings of the multivariate logistic regression analysis also affirmed that drug-drug interactions are an independent risk factor for major bleeding with an odds ratio of 4. 5 (95% CI: 2. 1–9. 5). This analysis also excluded other variables that could affect the outcome of the study including age, gender, and other cardiovascular diseases.

Figure 2. Odds Ratio for Major Bleeding Complications



Discussion

The objective of this study was to assess the DDIs of anticoagulants and antiplatelet agents in cardiovascular patients, and the results of the present research provide useful data about the effects of these interactions on patients' outcomes. This research shows that there is a high incidence of DDIs between the two major classes of anticoagulant and antiplatelet drugs and clinical results.

Prevalence and Types of Drug-Drug Interactions

In the present research, the findings revealed that half of the patients experienced DDIs between the anticoagulant and antiplatelet drugs. The most frequent drug-drug interactions were observed between aspirin and warfarin, and this was identified in 53 patients. 3% of the interaction group, while the remaining 97% of the patients remain relatively ignorant of the disease. This is in line with other studies that have shown that this combination increases the risk of bleeding. The next striking combination was clopidogrel and dabigatran with an incidence of 26. 7%. This is due to concerns about the synergistic antithrombotic effect which may in turn increase the bleeding risks. At the same time, the combination of clopidogrel and warfarin was mentioned in 6 cases, which is much lower than in the case of the combination with diclofenac. 7% of patients. This may be the case because the concurrent use of these drugs is not as frequent as the use of aspirin and warfarin. These findings suggest that clinicians need to pay attention to patients on these combination therapies because the impact on bleeding risk is not similar.

Adverse Clinical Outcomes

It was observed that major bleeding complications were higher in the interaction group which was 20% as compared to the non-interaction group which was 3%. 3% which is in support of the increased bleeding risk of these drugs. This finding explains the increased bleeding rates in the patients on both anticoagulants and antiplatelet agents. The interaction group also had more minor bleeding complications and hospitalizations because of adverse events. The hospitalization rate has also increased (16. 7% vs. 5. 3%) and this underlines the clinical importance of dealing with such patients and the need to enhance follow-up to minimize such adverse outcomes. Although the frequency rate of stroke in the interaction group was not significantly different, which was 6. 7%, it also supports the hypothesis that drug-drug interactions may hurt the patients.

Clinical Implications

The following are the clinical implications of the findings of this study: First, the bleeding risk which is related to drug-drug interactions is high and needs constant monitoring and adequate control. Clinicians should be aware of the interaction potential of these drug combinations and the dosages should be adjusted or other therapies should be selected to achieve the best balance of efficacy and safety. Second, the results suggest that new and enhanced recommendations and tools are needed to assist clinicians who encounter patients on both anticoagulation and antiplatelet therapy. Decision support systems and clinical alerts may help improve patient safety and identify patients who are at a higher risk of interaction.

Limitations

It is pertinent to mention here that there are some limitations in this study which can be explained as follows. These are some of the limitations of the study; they include the fact that the study is observational and therefore it is not possible to make causal inferences from the results and also there might be unmeasured confounding factors. Moreover, the number of patients included in the study, 300, although sufficient for statistical analysis, may not reveal all the possibilities of drug interactions in various populations and situations. More studies with larger and heterogeneous populations should be carried out to replicate these findings and to examine the effects of different interactions and doses of anticoagulants and antiplatelet agents.

Future Research Directions

Further studies should be carried out to determine the effects of drug-drug interactions in the long run on the patients. Moreover, studies that explored various anticoagulant/antiplatelet treatments and the idea of pharmacogenomics in cardiovascular patients might provide additional data on cardiovascular patients' management. Enhancing understanding of patients' responses to these therapies may also be achieved by researching genetic factors that affect drug metabolism and interaction.

Conclusion

The literature review part of the present work was used to identify information related to the frequency and importance of drug-drug interactions of anticoagulants and antiplatelet agents in cardiovascular patients. This study also confirms that there are many DDIs between these common drugs and these interactions increase the risk of adverse clinical events like major bleeding and hospitalization. From the results, the co-administration of aspirin and warfarin is the most frequent and raises the risk of major bleeding episodes compared to the other drug pairs. Also, the combination of clopidogrel and dabigatran was mentioned as one of the major issues because it contributes to bleeding. These results stress the correct use of these drugs, and it can be concluded that clinicians should be more careful when using these agents. The higher rate of AE in patients with DDIs confirms the relevance of the individual patient monitoring and the measures concerning each patient. Therefore, there is a need to improve clinical recommendations and decision tools to reduce the likelihood of these interactions and improve the safety of patients and treatments. However, it is also necessary to mention certain limitations of the present research: it is an observational study, and the number of participants included in the study is not very large. Future studies should focus on the sample size and variability and more attention should be paid to the follow-up studies to see the effects of such interaction. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of further research and enhancement of the clinical management of the issue of drug-drug interactions between anticoagulants and antiplatelet agents. Thus, increasing the level of monitoring and using better decision-support tools, the problem of dangerous drug combinations can be solved, and the safety and quality of patient treatment can be improved.

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