Necrosis and positivity for Epstein-Barr virus encoded RNA by in situ hybridization are frequent and supportive findings.2

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Non-Vitamin K Antagonist Oral Anticoagulants
An Appeal for Consensus on Terminology

To the Editor:

In the past few years, various alternative oral anticoagulants to the vitamin K antagonist (VKA) class of drugs (most commonly warfarin) have been tested and/or approved for various indications, including stroke prevention in atrial fibrillation, prevention and treatment of VTE, and secondary prevention of acute coronary syndrome.1,4 These drugs were initially designated novel oral anticoagulants or new oral anticoagulants (NOACs).5 They fall into two broad classes: direct thrombin inhibitors (dabigatran), which inhibit thrombin (Factor IIa), and Factor Xa inhibitors (rivaroxaban, apixaban, and edoxaban), which inhibit Factor Xa.1,5 These drugs are no longer novel because this designation expires after 1 year. Given that dabigatran, the first agent on the market, was approved in 2010 and edoxaban is still in the pipeline for approval, the “new” designation could still apply, but even this one will be old after a few years, so we should think of a better way to refer to them.

Various alternatives have been proposed, including

- Target-specific oral anticoagulants (TSOCs)
- Direct oral anticoagulants (DOACs)
- Nonmonitored oral anticoagulants (NOACs)
- Nonwarfarin oral anticoagulants (NOACs)
- Non-VKA oral anticoagulants (NOACs)

Each of these terms has advantages and disadvantages, but consensus is needed because papers, guidelines, and lecturers at meetings have begun using the alternative names for these drugs differently, causing confusion. Some consensus on terminology is clearly needed.

We strongly suggest maintaining the NOAC acronym used in older publications and guidelines to avoid the confusion associated with an acronym change. Because many nonwarfarin VKAs (eg, acenocoumarol) are used worldwide, we propose that the designation “NOACs” should refer to “non-VKA oral anticoagulants,” notwithstanding that warfarin was the comparator in each of the pivotal trials leading to registration of these alternative agents.

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