



Situational Safety: Proper Lighting for Safe Dosing

Proper lighting plays an important role in improving safety for patients who take warfarin (Coumadin®). Good lighting is not only important for patients to see where they are going; it also helps many patients identify their medications, including the nine strengths of warfarin.

The FDA has defined generic warfarin as the “bioequivalent” of Coumadin®¹. However, one significant difference between generic warfarin and Coumadin® is that only Coumadin® imprints the name and dose of the product on the tablet for each of the nine available strengths.

Tablet identification is critical to proper dosing and overall patient safety. Errors in warfarin dosing may result in higher intensity of warfarin therapy increasing the risk of serious or fatal bleeding.² While all warfarin products have the same color identification scheme for the identification of tablet strength, it can be challenging to distinguish one color from another. For example, a 2.5mg tablet is green and the 6mg tablet is teal (dark green-blue). These tablets look similar enough, especially in poor lighting, to potentially cause a medication error.

Quality lighting can help patients improve tablet identification and avoid under- or over-dosing. To better ensure the correct dose of warfarin is taken, tablets should be examined (but not stored) in natural sunlight if possible, or under bright electric light as an alternative. Patients are advised to double-check the tablets they take and/or put into their pillboxes.

Patients should call their doctor or pharmacist with any questions or confusion about the color, strength, shape, or brand of warfarin they receive before they actually take it.

Visit: www.PTINR.com

1 Shrivastava, S.P. (1998). Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. Retrieved April 22, 2008, from Food and Drug Administration Web site:

http://www.fda.gov/cder/foi/anda/99/40301_Warfarin%20Sodium_Bioegr.pdf

2 Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. (2007). *Medication Guide for Coumadin Tablets and Coumadin for Injection* [Package Insert]. Princeton, NJ: Bristol-Myers Squibb Company.