

Case 2

GUARD Method™ in Action

Pharmacology Case Study: High-Risk Medication – New Symptoms



Meet Your Patient



Mrs. Angela Brooks

64 years old | Medical-Surgical Unit
Newly started on apixaban (Eliquis)

Patient Profile

64 years old
98 kg (216 lb)
Full code

Female, African American
Lives at home alone
Allergies: No known drug allergies

Reason for Admission

Admitted with a right lower extremity deep vein thrombosis (DVT)
She was started on apixaban (Eliquis) for anticoagulation and is on hospital day 2. This morning, she reports feeling okay and is preparing for discharge home tomorrow.

Initial Vital Signs (0800)

Temperature	98.4 °F (36.9 °C)
Blood Pressure	138/84 mm Hg
Heart Rate	78 beats/min
Respiratory Rate	18 breaths/min
Oxygen Saturation	97% on room air
Pain Rating	2/10 (leg)

Past Medical History

- Hypertension
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus
- Chronic kidney disease (Stage 3)
- Obesity
- Osteoarthritis

Initial Assessment (0800)

- Alert and oriented × 4
- Right lower leg mild swelling and tenderness
- Lungs clear
- Skin warm and dry
- No signs of active bleeding

Home Medications

- Lisinopril 20 mg daily
- Metformin 500 mg twice daily
- Amlodipine 10 mg daily
- Acetaminophen 650 mg as needed for pain

Initial Laboratory Results

BUN	24 mg/dL
Creatinine	1.4 mg/dL (baseline 1.2)
Hgb/Hct	12.8 g/dL / 38%
Platelets	$210 \times 10^3/\mu\text{L}$

Current Medications

- Apixaban (Eliquis) 10 mg PO twice daily (first 7 days, then 5 mg twice daily)
- Other home medications as listed



Points to Consider

- What is the expected therapeutic effect of apixaban?
- What are the common and serious adverse effects?
- How do renal function and age affect the use of apixaban?
- What assessment findings indicate a potential complication?
- What patient education is important before discharge?

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Later in the day, Mrs. Brooks reports that she “does not feel right.” She appears more tired and is sitting in bed holding her head.

🕒 **Change in Condition (1400)**

- Reports a new headache and feeling lightheaded.
- States her nose started bleeding earlier and was hard to stop (bleeding has now slowed).
- Notices a small amount of blood in her urine.
- Feels more tired than earlier.
- Denies chest pain or shortness of breath.

📊 **Vital Signs Comparison**

Parameter	0800 (Initial)	1400 (New Information)
Temperature	98.4 °F (36.9 °C)	99.1 °F (37.3 °C) ↑
Blood Pressure	138/84 mm Hg	126/78 mm Hg ↓
Heart Rate	78 beats/min	92 beats/min ↑
Respiratory Rate	18 breaths/min	18 breaths/min
Oxygen Saturation	97% on room air	97% on room air
Pain Rating	2/10 (leg)	Headache 5/10

👂 **Current Assessment (1400)**

- Alert and oriented × 4, but appears fatigued
- Nosebleed earlier (now minimal)
- Reports lightheadedness
- Small amount of pink-tinged urine
- Right lower leg still swollen and tender
- No chest pain or shortness of breath

🧪 **New Laboratory Results (1400)**

BUN	28 mg/dL (increased)	↑
Creatinine	1.6 mg/dL (increased)	↑
Hgb/Hct	11.2 g/dL / 33% (decreased)	↓
Platelets	198 × 10 ³ /μL	↓

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Question 1

Which assessment finding is the highest priority and requires immediate follow-up?

- A** Headache and feeling lightheaded
- B** Blood pressure 126/78 mm Hg
- C** Small amount of pink-tinged urine
- D** Mild swelling and tenderness in the right leg

Question 2

What is the most appropriate nursing action at this time?

- A** Administer the next dose of apixaban as scheduled.
- B** Notify the healthcare provider of the new findings.
- C** Encourage increased fluid intake.
- D** Recheck vital signs in 2 hours.

Think Like a Nurse

1 What additional information would be helpful?

2 Which findings are most concerning and why?

3 How does the GUARD Method help organize your thinking in this case?

4 What teaching points will be important for Mrs. Brooks before discharge?

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Apply the GUARD Method: High-Risk Medication – New Symptoms



Patient: _____

Age: _____

Diagnosis: _____

Medication: _____



GOAL

What do you want to achieve for this patient right now?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What is the priority goal for this patient?
- What medication therapy outcome are you trying to achieve?
- What are the expected therapeutic effects?
- What are the measurable outcomes (vital signs, lab values, symptoms)?



UNSAFE OUTCOMES

What could go wrong with this medication or condition?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What are the potential adverse or toxic effects?
- What complications could occur if the medication is not working or is causing harm?
- What signs and symptoms indicate an unsafe outcome?
- What findings would require immediate intervention?



AFFECTING FACTORS

What factors can influence this medication, the patient's response, or the risk for complications?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What patient factors may affect medication effectiveness or safety (age, weight, kidney/liver function, comorbidities)?
- What other medications or supplements may interact?
- What lab values are important to consider?
- What recent changes in the patient's condition could affect the medication?
- What lifestyle, diet, or cultural factors may play a role?



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RESULTS

What do the assessment findings show?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What are the key assessment findings (subjective and objective)?
- Are there changes from previous findings?
- What lab results are relevant?
- Do the findings support the expected therapeutic effect or suggest an adverse effect?
- What trends do you notice?



DO OR DON'T

What are the priority nursing actions?

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What actions should you take based on your analysis?
- Do you need to hold the medication, notify the provider, or take other immediate action?
- What monitoring is required?
- What patient education should be provided?
- What safety measures are important?



Case Analysis Questions

- What is the most important problem in this case?
- How does the GUARD Method help you organize your thinking?
- What data do you need to monitor closely?
- What additional information would be helpful?
- What would you include in your handoff report?



Key Takeaways

- What did you learn from this case?
- How can you apply this approach to other patients?
- What are important teaching points for faculty and students?
- How does this case highlight safe medication administration and patient-centered care?