Circulation

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open-Label Randomized Trial Comparing Oral Anticoagulation With and Without Single Antiplatelet Therapy in Patients With Atrial Fibrillation and Stable Coronary Artery Disease Beyond 1 Year After Coronary Stent Implantation

OAC-ALONE Study

Editorial, see p 617

Yukiko Matsumura-Nakano, MD et al

BACKGROUND: Despite recommendations in the guidelines and consensus documents, there has been no randomized controlled trial evaluating oral anticoagulation (OAC) alone without antiplatelet therapy (APT) in patients with atrial fibrillation and stable coronary artery disease beyond 1 year after coronary stenting.

METHODS: This study was a prospective, multicenter, open-label, noninferiority trial comparing OAC alone to combined OAC and single APT among patients with atrial fibrillation beyond 1 year after stenting in a 1:1 randomization fashion. The primary end point was a composite of all-cause death, myocardial infarction, stroke, or systemic embolism. The major secondary end point was a composite of the primary end point or major bleeding according to the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis classification. Although the trial was designed to enroll 2000 patients during 12 months, enrollment was prematurely terminated after enrolling 696 patients in 38 months.

RESULTS: Mean age was 75.0±7.6 years, and 85.2% of patients were men. OAC was warfarin in 75.2% and direct oral anticoagulants in 24.8% of patients. The mean $CHADS_2$ score was 2.5±1.2. During a median follow-up interval of 2.5 years, the primary end point occurred in 54 patients (15.7%) in the OAC-alone group and in 47 patients (13.6%) in the combined OAC and APT group (hazard ratio, 1.16; 95% CI, 0.79–1.72; *P*=0.20 for noninferiority, *P*=0.45 for superiority). The major secondary end point occurred in 67 patients (19.5%) in the OAC-alone group and in 67 patients (19.4%) in the combined OAC and APT group (hazard ratio, 0.99; 95% CI, 0.71–1.39; *P*=0.016 for noninferiority, *P*=0.96 for superiority). Myocardial infarction occurred in 8 (2.3%) and 4 (1.2%) patients, whereas stroke or systemic embolism occurred in 13 (3.8%) and 19 (5.5%) patients, respectively. Major bleeding occurred in 27 (7.8%) and 36 (10.4%) patients, respectively.

CONCLUSIONS: This randomized trial did not establish noninferiority of OAC alone to combined OAC and APT in patients with atrial fibrillation and stable coronary artery disease beyond 1 year after stenting. Because patient enrollment was prematurely terminated, the study was underpowered and inconclusive. Future larger studies are required to establish the optimal antithrombotic regimen in this population.

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Clinical Perspective

What Is New?

- In patients with atrial fibrillation and stable coronary artery disease beyond 1 year after coronary stenting, the optimal antithrombotic regimen remains uncertain, although some guidelines recommend oral anticoagulation (OAC) alone.
- The present study is the first randomized trial comparing OAC alone and combination of OAC and single antiplatelet therapy.
- The trial failed to establish noninferiority of OAC alone compared with a regimen of OAC and single antiplatelet therapy because patient enrollment was prematurely terminated, leading to an underpowered sample size.

What Are the Clinical Implications?

- Large, adequately powered, randomized trials are needed to determine the optimal antithrombotic regimen in this population.

There remain unsettled issues on the antithrombotic therapy in patients with concomitant atrial fibrillation (AF) and stable coronary artery disease (CAD) who underwent percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) with stents. Antiplatelet therapy (APT) is regarded as an essential treatment in preventing thrombotic events, including stent thrombosis in patients with CAD,[1–3] whereas oral anticoagulation (OAC) is superior to APT in preventing thromboembolic events, ischemic stroke in particular, in patients with AF.[4,5] Several recent clinical trials in patients with AF undergoing PCI stenting have demonstrated that dual therapy with OAC and platelet $P2Y_{12}$ receptor inhibitor was associated with a lower risk for bleeding without increasing thrombotic events compared with triple therapy with OAC and dual APT ≤1 year after coronary stenting.[6–8] Beyond 1 year after coronary stenting, the European Society of Cardiology guidelines have consistently recommended lifelong OAC without APT in patients with AF.[9–12] The North American expert consensus documents also recommend OAC alone for patients with low thrombotic and high bleeding risk.[13,14] However, despite the guidelines' recommendation and several supportive observational studies,[15–17] there has been no randomized controlled trial evaluating the efficacy and safety of OAC monotherapy in patients with AF and stable CAD. In routine clinical practice, antiplatelet agents are often used in combination with OAC in this setting,[18,19] although the combination is associated with higher bleeding risk.[20–22] Accordingly, we conducted a randomized trial comparing OAC alone to a combination of OAC and APT in patients with concomitant AF and stable CAD beyond 1 year after coronary stenting.

METHODS

The data, analytic methods, and study materials will not be made available to other researchers for purposes of reproducing the results or replicating the procedure.

Study Design

The OAC-ALONE study (Optimizing Antithrombotic Care in Patients With Atrial Fibrillation and Coronary Stent) was a prospective, multicenter, randomized, open-label, noninferiority trial comparing OAC alone with combined OAC and single APT in patients with concomitant AF and stable CAD who had received coronary stents >1 year ago. We enrolled patients who were treated with a combination of an oral anticoagulant and a single antiplatelet agent. Detailed inclusion and exclusion criteria are described Appendix A in the online-only Data Supplement.

Patients were randomly assigned in a 1:1 ratio to the OAC-alone group or to the combined OAC and APT group, stratified by center. Randomization was performed centrally through an electronic data capture system with a stochastic minimization algorithm to balance treatment assignments. Study group assignments were blinded to the statistician, members of the independent clinical event committee, steering committee, and the sponsor (Daiichi Sankyo). The sponsor was involved in study protocol design but not in the study conduct, data collection, statistical analysis, and writing of the manuscript. Complete lists of the study organization, participating centers, and investigators are available in Appendix B and C in the online-only Data Supplement. The study protocol was approved by the institutional review board at each participating center. Written informed consent was obtained from all patients.

Antithrombotic Therapy

OAC could be either warfarin or direct oral anticoagulants (DOACs). The recommended target international normalized ratio (INR) range for dose adjustment of warfarin was 2.0 to 3.0 in patients <70 years of age and 1.6 to 2.6 in patients ≥70 years of age based on Japanese guidelines.[23] INR measurements were recommended at least every 3 months. Patients receiving warfarin were eligible for the trial only if INR at the time of enrollment was ≥1.6. The approved standard or reduced doses of DOACs for AF were dabigatran 150 or 110 mg twice daily, rivaroxaban 15 or 10 mg once daily, apixaban 5 or 2.5 mg twice daily, and edoxaban 60 or 30 mg once daily. We recommended dose reduction of DOACs based on the formal criteria for each DOAC, although we allowed dose reduction of DOACs at the discretion of the patient or physician. Only aspirin (81–324 mg/day) or clopidogrel (75 mg/day) was allowed as an antiplatelet agent at the time of enrollment.

Follow-Up and End Points

All study patients were followed until 1 year after the last patient enrollment. Follow-up was obtained from hospital charts or by contacting patients or referring physicians. The study secretariat conducted monitoring through the electronic database, and inconsistencies were resolved by queries to the site investigators.

The primary end point was a composite of all-cause death, myocardial infarction (MI), stroke, or systemic embolism. The major secondary end point was a composite of the primary end point or major bleeding according to the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis (ISTH) classification.[24] Other secondary end points included the individual components of the primary end point, cardiovascular death, stent thrombosis, major bleeding, and hospitalization for heart failure. Major bleeding was defined according to ISTH criteria, but bleeding events according to the Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction classification were also assessed.[25] In a post hoc analysis, we assessed ischemic end point defined as a composite of cardiovascular death, MI, ischemic stroke, or systemic embolism, and we also assessed ischemic or bleeding end point defined as a composite of ischemic end point or major bleeding. Cardiovascular death, MI, and stent thrombosis were defined according to the Academic Research Consortium definitions.[26] Only Academic Research Consortium definite stent thrombosis was adjudicated as stent thrombosis. Stroke was defined as the acute onset of a focal neurological deficit of presumed vascular origin lasting ≥24 hours. Strokes were categorized as either hemorrhagic or ischemic on the basis of brain imaging studies. Cerebral bleeding that occurred secondary to ischemic stroke was not regarded as hemorrhagic stroke. All clinical events comprising the primary and secondary end points were blindly adjudicated by an independent clinical event committee. Detailed definitions of the end points are described in Appendix D in the online-only Data Supplement.

Sample Size Calculation

The study was a noninferiority trial powered for noninferiority of OAC alone to combined OAC and APT in terms of the primary end point. We expected patient enrollment to last 1 year, with an anticipated average follow-up period of 1.5 years. In the CREDO-Kyoto registry cohort-2 (The Coronary Revascularization Demonstrating Outcome Study in Kyoto),[27] the cumulative incidence of death, MI, or stroke between 1 and 2.5 years (during a 1.5-year period) after PCI stenting was 12.1% in patients with AF <75 years of age and receiving warfarin. Considering the possibility of lower risk patients being enrolled in the study, we assumed an event rate of 8.0% (2/3 of 12.1%) during an average follow-up of 1.5 years. Noninferiority margin was set as 4.0%, half of the assumed true event rate. Thus, 1934 patients were expected to yield 90% power to detect noninferiority at a level of 1-sided type 1 error of 0.025. Given potential dropouts during follow-up, 2000 patients were planned to be enrolled. However, because of slow patient enrollment, the trial was extended. Finally, after the approval of the data and safety monitoring board, the steering committee prematurely terminated patient enrollment on December 31, 2016, after enrolling 696 patients in 38 months. Final follow-up was collected between October 1, 2017, and May 18, 2018. Because the extended trial duration resulted in a longer follow-up interval, the anticipated event rate was assumed to be higher than originally planned. Therefore, the protocol and trial registration were amended to set a noninferiority margin as 1.5 on the hazard ratio (HR) scale for the primary and major secondary end points on September 4, 2017, which corresponded to the original noninferiority margin of 4.0% for 8.0% (50% of the expected event rate).

Statistical Analysis

Categorical variables are expressed as the number and percentage and are compared using the χ^2 test or Fisher exact test as appropriate. Continuous variables are expressed as mean±SD or median with interquartile range and compared using the Student *t* test or Wilcoxon rank sum test based on their distributions. Time in therapeutic range during follow-up was calculated by the Rosendaal method.[28]

Clinical outcomes were analyzed according to the intention-to-treat principle. Each end point as well as crossover and changes of antithrombotic regimen was assessed by the Kaplan-Meier method and compared by a log-rank test. Effect of treatment was compared by the Cox proportional hazard model and expressed as a HR with a 95% CI. Proportional hazard assumptions were assessed on the plots of log(time) versus log [–log(survival)] and were verified as acceptable. The statistical significance of possible heterogeneity in the treatment effect across several prespecified subgroups was assessed with interaction terms in the Cox proportional hazard models.

All statistical analyses were performed by a physician (Y. Matsumura-Nakano) and a statistician (T. Morimoto) with the use of JMP version 12.0 and SAS version 9.4 (SAS Institute). All reported *P* values were 2-sided, and *P* values <0.05 were regarded as statistically significant except for noninferiority testing, in which 1-sided *P* values of <0.025 were considered statistically significant.

RESULTS

Study Population

From November 5, 2013, to December 28, 2016, a total of 696 patients from 111 centers were enrolled. Excluding 6 patients who withdrew consent, 690 patients were included in the current analysis: 344 patients in the OAC-alone group and 346 patients in the combined OAC and APT group (Figure 1). After randomization, we identified but did not exclude 14 patients who did not meet the inclusion criteria (protocol violation): 6 patients who had a history of balloon angioplasty only without stenting, 2 patients who received PCI within 12 months, 4 patients treated with OAC and dual APT, 1 patient treated with OAC alone, and 1 patient receiving warfarin with INR of <1.6.

The study population included large proportions of patients with advanced age (mean age of 75.0 years), diabetes mellitus, heart failure, and previous MI. Types of AF were paroxysmal in 43.6%, persistent in 7.2%, and permanent in 49.1% of patients. The mean $CHADS_2$ and CHA_2DS_2-VASc scores were 2.5±1.2 and 4.6±1.4, respectively. The proportion of patients with a HAS-BLED score ≥3 was 44.2%. Median interval from the last PCI to study enrollment was 4.5 (interquartile range, 2.1–7.6) years, and a drug-eluting stent was used in 71.2% of patients. OAC was warfarin in 75.2% and DOACs in 24.8% of patients. APT was aspirin in 85.9% and clopidogrel in 14.5% of patients. The base-

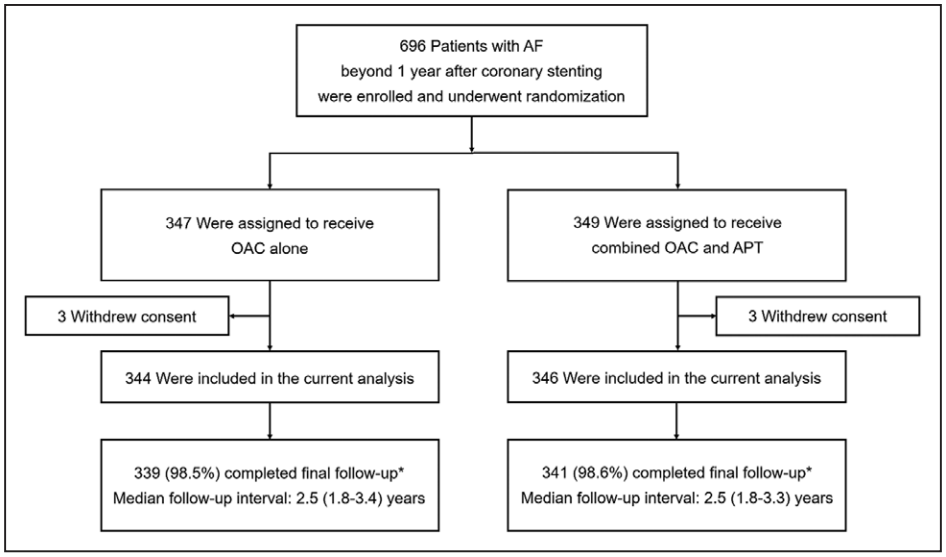


Figure 1. Study flow chart.
Follow-up interval was presented as median with interquartile range. AF indicates atrial fibrillation; APT, antiplatelet therapy; and OAC, oral anticoagulation. *Final follow-up data were collected between October 1, 2017, and May 18, 2018.

line characteristics and medications were well balanced between the 2 groups except for the higher prevalence of renal insufficiency without hemodialysis (*P*=0.01) and lower prescription rate of proton pump inhibitors (*P*=0.02) in the OAC-alone group (Table 1).

Antithrombotic Therapy During Follow-Up

Complete clinical follow-up was achieved in 680 patients (98.6%), with a median follow-up interval of 2.5 (interquartile range, 1.8–3.4) years (Figure 1). The final follow-up data were obtained from hospital charts in 597 patients (87.8%), from referring physicians in 63 patients (9.3%), and by contacting patients in 20 patients (2.9%). During follow-up, changes in the antithrombotic regimen except for the types and doses of OAC occurred in 63 patients (18.3%) in the OAC-alone group and in 67 patients (19.4%) in the combined OAC and APT group (Figure I in the online-only Data Supplement). Crossover to the alternative regimen occurred in 42 patients (12.2%) in the OAC-alone group mainly because of the progression of CAD (PCI procedures in the majority) during follow-up (N=30, 71.4%), and in 31 patients (9.0%) in the combined OAC and APT group mainly because of bleeding events (N=15, 48.4%) and physicians' discretion or patients' request concerning bleeding (N=11, 35.5%; Figure 2 and Table I in the online-only Data Supplement). Warfarin was changed to DOACs in 44 patients (17.3%) in the OAC-alone group and in 43 patients (16.3%) in the combined OAC and APT group. DOACs were changed to warfarin in 2 patients (2.2%) in the OAC-alone group and in 2 patients (2.4%) in the combined OAC and APT group.

The time in therapeutic range was available in 486 (93.6%) of 519 patients who were initially treated with warfarin. The median of available INR data per patients was 14 (interquartile range, 8–21). With the predefined therapeutic INR range according to the Japanese guidelines (2.0–3.0 for those <70 years of age and 1.6–2.6 for those ≥70 years of age), the mean time in therapeutic range was 75.6% in the OAC-alone group and 73.1% in the combined OAC and APT group (*P*=0.38; Figure 3A). Using a post hoc therapeutic INR range of 2.0 to 3.0 regardless of age, the mean time in therapeutic range was 54.9% in the OAC-alone group and 47.9% in the combined OAC and APT group (*P*=0.004; Figure 3B). Most of the time out of the therapeutic INR range was spent below the INR range.

Clinical Outcomes

The primary end point occurred in 54 patients (15.7%) in the OAC-alone group and in 47 patients (13.6%) in the combined OAC and APT group. Noninferiority of OAC alone to combined OAC and APT was not met for the primary end point (HR, 1.16; 95% CI, 0.79–1.72; *P*=0.20 for noninferiority, *P*=0.45 for superiority; Figure 4A and Table 2). The major secondary end point occurred in 67 patients (19.5%) in the OAC-alone group and in 67 patients (19.4%) in the combined OAC and APT group. Noninferiority of OAC alone to combined OAC and APT was met for the major secondary end point (HR, 0.99; 95% CI, 0.71–1.39; *P*=0.016 for noninferiority, *P*=0.96 for superiority; Figure 4B and Table 2).

Among the individual secondary end points, the dominant types of events included hospitalization for heart failure, all-cause death, major bleeding, cardiovascular death, stroke or systemic embolism, and MI with decreasing frequency in order (Table 2). MI occurred in 8

Table 1. Baseline Characteristics

Characteristics	OAC Alone (N=344)		Combined OAC and APT (N=346)	
Age, y	74.9±0.4		75.2±0.4	
Age ≥75 y	190	(55.2)	185	(53.5)
Male sex	294	(85.5)	294	(85.0)
Body mass index	24.3±3.4		24.4±3.4	
Hypertension	292	(84.9)	301	(87.0)
Diabetes mellitus	152	(44.2)	138	(39.9)
On insulin therapy	30	(8.7)	26	(7.5)
Dyslipidemia	294	(85.5)	298	(86.1)
Current smoker	27	(7.9)	23	(6.7)
Heart failure	140	(40.7)	151	(43.6)
Ejection fraction ≤40%	49	(15.2)	60	(18.6)
Previous myocardial infarction	129	(37.5)	137	(39.6)
Previous stroke	55	(16.0)	49	(14.2)
Aortic/peripheral vascular disease	40	(11.6)	42	(12.1)
eGFR <30 mL/min/1.73 m^2, not on hemodialysis	34	(10.0)	17	(4.9)
Hemodialysis	2	(0.6)	2	(0.6)
Anemia (hemoglobin <11 g/dL)	44	(12.9)	34	(9.9)
Thrombocytopenia (platelet <10×10^4/μL)	12	(3.5)	18	(5.2)
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	12	(3.5)	14	(4.1)
Chronic liver disease	10	(2.9)	6	(1.7)
Malignancy	53	(15.4)	52	(15.0)
$CHADS_2$ score	2.6±1.2		2.5±1.2	
0	11	(3.2)	9	(2.6)
1	49	(14.2)	59	(17.1)
2	112	(32.6)	118	(34.1)
≥3	172	(50.0)	160	(46.2)
CHA_2DS_2-VASc score	4.6±1.4		4.6±1.4	
0	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)
1	1	(0.3)	3	(0.9)
2	20	(5.8)	15	(4.3)
≥3	323	(93.9)	328	(94.8)
HAS-BLED score				
0	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)
1	18	(5.2)	12	(3.5)
2	176	(51.2)	179	(51.7)
≥3	150	(43.6)	155	(44.8)
Type of atrial fibrillation				
Paroxysmal	158	(45.9)	143	(41.3)
Persistent	27	(7.9)	23	(6.7)
Permanent	159	(46.2)	180	(52.0)

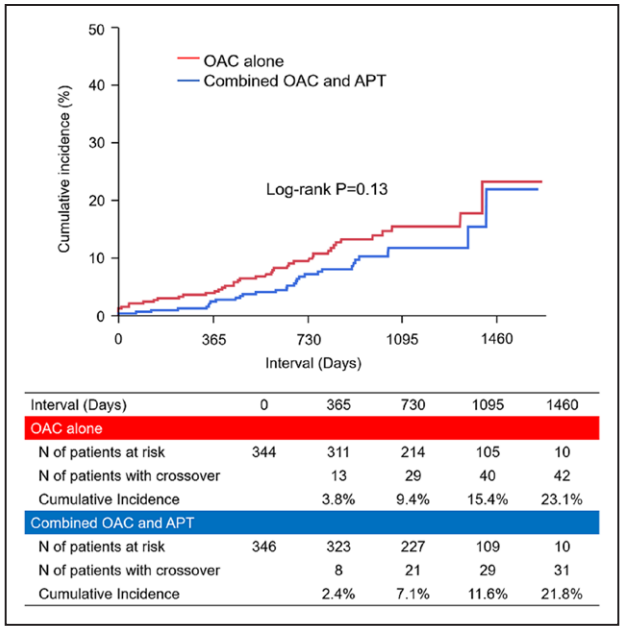
(Continued)

Table 1. Continued

Characteristics	OAC Alone (N=344)		Combined OAC and APT (N=346)	
Procedural characteristics				
Number of PCI procedures	1 (1–3)		1 (1–2)	
Number of stents	2 (1–3)		2 (1–3)	
Type of stent				
Drug-eluting	246	(71.7)	240	(70.6)
1st generation	80	(23.4)	74	(22.0)
2nd generation	165	(48.3)	163	(48.4)
Bare metal	97	(28.3)	100	(29.4)
Left main coronary stenting	23	(6.7)	22	(6.4)
Multivessel stenting	119	(34.6)	119	(35.0)
Years from the last PCI	4.4 (1.8–7.7)		4.6 (2.4–7.4)	
Medications				
Aspirin	294	(85.5)	299	(86.4)
Clopidogrel	52	(15.1)	48	(13.9)
Warfarin	255	(74.1)	264	(76.3)
INR at enrollment	2.05 (1.81–2.35)		2.02 (1.80–2.27)	
DOACs	89	(25.9)	82	(23.7)
Approved dose	72	(80.9)	68	(82.9)
Standard dose	35	(39.3)	40	(48.8)
Reduced dose	37	(41.6)	28	(34.1)
Nonapproved dose	17	(19.1)	14	(17.1)
Overdose	4	(4.5)	0	(0)
Underdose	13	(14.6)	14	(17.1)
Dabigatran	21	(23.6)	20	(24.4)
Rivaroxaban	24	(27.0)	17	(20.7)
Apixaban	32	(36.0)	37	(45.1)
Edoxaban	12	(13.5)	8	(9.8)
Statins	268	(77.9)	277	(80.1)
β-blockers	219	(63.7)	234	(67.6)
ACE-I/ARB	227	(66.0)	235	(67.9)
NSAIDs	15	(4.4)	16	(4.6)
Proton pump inhibitors	183	(53.2)	216	(62.4)

Categorical variables are presented as number (percentage), and continuous variables are presented as mean±SD or median with interquartile range. Values were missing for body mass index in 14 patients, ejection fraction in 44 patients, eGFR in 5 patients, anemia in 3 patients, thrombocytopenia in 3 patients, number of PCI procedures in 3 patients, number of stents in 3 patients, type of stent in 1 patient, and type of drug-eluting stent in 5 patients. ACE-I indicates angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor; APT, antiplatelet therapy; ARB, angiotensin receptor blocker; DOACs, direct oral anticoagulants; eGFR, estimated glomerular filtration rate; INR, international normalized ratio; NSAIDs, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs; OAC, oral anticoagulation; and PCI, percutaneous coronary intervention.

patients (2.3%) in the OAC-alone group and in 4 patients (1.2%) in the combined OAC and APT group, whereas stroke or systemic embolism occurred in 13 (3.8%) and 19 patients (5.5%), respectively. Stent thrombosis only occurred in 2 patients (0.58%) in the OAC-alone group,



Interval (Days)	0	365	730	1095	1460
OAC alone					
N of patients at risk	344	311	214	105	10
N of patients with crossover		13	29	40	42
Cumulative Incidence		3.8%	9.4%	15.4%	23.1%
Combined OAC and APT					
N of patients at risk	346	323	227	109	10
N of patients with crossover		8	21	29	31
Cumulative Incidence		2.4%	7.1%	11.6%	21.8%

Figure 2. Cumulative incidence of crossover from the original regimen. Crossover indicated changes in antithrombotic regimen from OAC alone to OAC plus APT (single or dual APT) or from OAC plus single APT to OAC alone. APT indicates antiplatelet therapy; and OAC, oral anticoagulation.

and MI was a rare cause of death (Table II in the online-only Data Supplement). All MIs occurred in patients treated with warfarin (Table 3). ISTH major bleeding occurred in 27 patients (7.8%) in the OAC-alone group and in 36 patients (10.4%) in the combined OAC and APT group (HR, 0.73; 95% CI, 0.44–1.20; *P*=0.22; Table 2 and Table III in the online-only Data Supplement). Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction major bleeding occurred in 17 (4.9%) and 29 patients (8.4%), respectively (HR, 0.57; 95% CI, 0.31–1.03; *P*=0.07; Table 2). In the post hoc analysis, the ischemic end point, defined as a composite of cardiovascular death, MI, ischemic stroke, or systemic embolism, occurred in 36 patients (10.5%) in the OAC-alone group and 31 patients (9.0%) in the combined OAC and APT group (HR, 1.17; 95% CI, 0.73–1.91; *P*=0.32 for noninferiority, *P*=0.51 for superiority). The ischemic or bleeding end point, defined as a composite of ischemic end point or ISTH major bleeding, occurred in 55 patients (16.0%) in the OAC-alone group and in 59 patients (17.1%) in the combined OAC and APT group (HR, 0.92; 95% CI 0.64–1.33; *P*=0.009 for noninferiority, *P*=0.66 for superiority; Table 2). For the prespecified subgroups, there was no significant interaction between the various subgroups for the primary and major secondary end points except for previous MI, which was driven by the difference in the rate of noncardiovascular death (Figure 5 and Table IV in the online-only Data Supplement).

DISCUSSION

The present study is the first randomized trial comparing OAC alone to combined OAC and APT in patients with concomitant AF and stable CAD beyond 1 year after coronary stenting. However, patient enrollment was prematurely terminated because of its extremely slow pace, leading to a severely underpowered sample size. As a result, the noninferiority of OAC alone to combined OAC and APT was not met for the primary composite end point of all-cause death, MI, stroke, or systemic embolism, although it was met for the major secondary end point (a composite of primary end point or major bleeding).

The European Society of Cardiology practice guidelines' recommendation of lifelong OAC without APT in patients with concomitant AF and stable CAD was based on studies from the present era, demonstrating that warfarin alone was at least as effective as aspirin in reducing cardiovascular events in patients after MI.[9,29,30] Subsequently, a large nationwide Danish registry also supported the guidelines' recommendation, demonstrating that warfarin monotherapy was superior to aspirin in the prevention of coronary events, and warfarin plus APT may not be more protective but was associated with excess bleeding risk, although only 156 out of 950 patients (16.4%) in the warfarin-alone group had received coronary stenting.[16] After the introduction of DOACs, the subsequent European Society of Car-

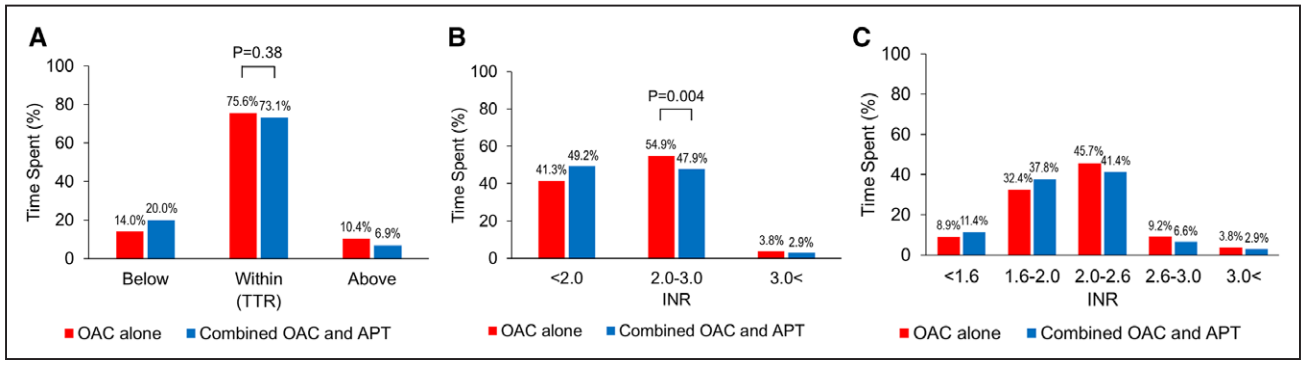
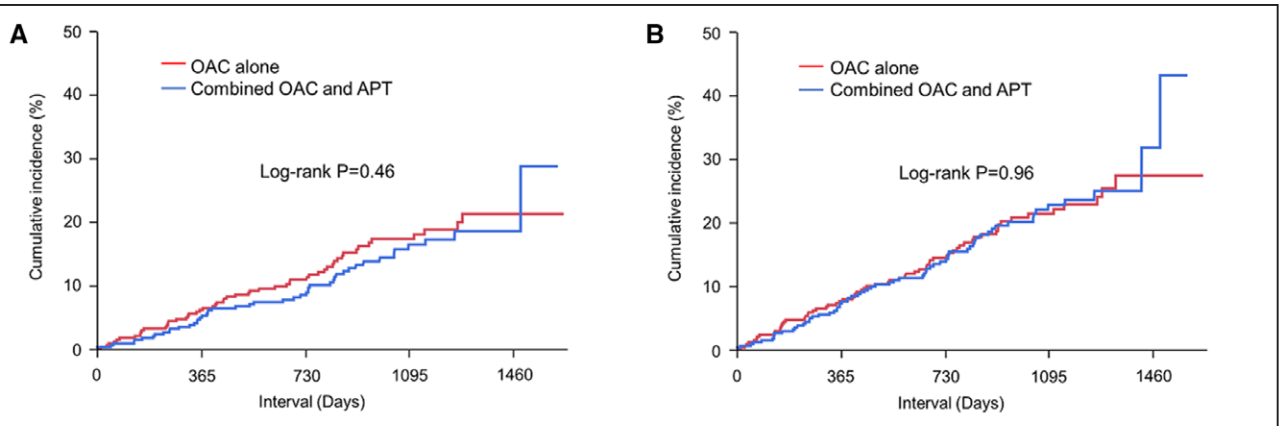


Figure 3. Time in therapeutic range in patients receiving warfarin.
A, Time spent below, within, and above the predefined therapeutic INR range based on the Japanese guidelines. **B**, Time spent below, within, and above the post hoc therapeutic INR range of 2.0 to 3.0. **C**, Time spent in the INR ranges of <1.6, 1.6–2.0, 2.0–2.6, 2.6–3.0, and >3.0. APT indicates antiplatelet therapy; INR, international normalized ratio; OAC, oral anticoagulation; and TTR, time in therapeutic range.



Interval (Days)	0	365	730	1095	1460
OAC alone					
N of patients at risk	344	319	236	122	12
N of patients with event		21	36	50	54
Cumulative Incidence		6.1%	10.9%	17.3%	21.2%
Combined OAC and APT					
N of patients at risk	346	325	238	113	10
N of patients with event		17	28	44	46
Cumulative Incidence		4.9%	8.5%	16.4%	18.5%

Interval (Days)	0	365	730	1095	1460
OAC alone					
N of patients at risk	344	314	227	115	12
N of patients with event		26	47	62	67
Cumulative Incidence		7.6%	14.4%	21.4%	27.3%
Combined OAC and APT					
N of patients at risk	346	317	223	105	8
N of patients with event		25	45	63	66
Cumulative Incidence		7.3%	13.9%	22.7%	31.8%

Figure 4. Cumulative incidence of the primary and major secondary end points.
A and **B**, Kaplan–Meier curves showing the cumulative incidence of the primary end point (a composite of all-cause death, myocardial infarction, stroke, or systemic embolism; **A**), and major secondary end point (a composite of primary end point or major bleeding; **B**). APT indicates antiplatelet therapy; and OAC, oral anticoagulation.

diology consensus document and guidelines have recommended lifelong OAC alone with either warfarin or DOACs in patients with AF with stable CAD[10,11] based on the results of the phase III randomized trials comparing warfarin and DOACs in the stroke prevention for nonvalvular AF, which showed comparable protective effect for MI between warfarin and DOACs.[31–35] However, in routine clinical practice, antiplatelet agents are still commonly used in combination with OAC beyond 1 year after coronary stenting[18,19] mainly because of concern related to the risk of stent thrombosis after cessation of APT.[3,36,37] Actually, in the present study, difficulty in patient enrollment mainly stemmed from substantial reluctance of cardiologists to withdraw APT in stented patients because of these concerns. Indeed, as far as we know, there is no ongoing randomized trial focusing on the efficacy and safety of OAC alone in patients with AF with coronary stents despite the recommendations in the guidelines and consensus documents.[9–14]

In the present study, noninferiority of OAC alone to combined OAC and APT was not established for the primary end point because of inadequate statistical power. There was a slight numeric excess of the primary end point in the OAC-alone group compared with the combined OAC and APT group (54 versus 47). However, it appeared largely driven by noncardiovascular death (20 versus 14), which seems unlikely to be causally related to the difference in the antithrombotic regimen (Table IV in the online-only Data Supplement). The incidence of stent thrombosis, the most dreaded stent-related adverse event, was acceptably low in the OAC-alone group (0.23%/year),[38–40] and the incidence of MI was also acceptable (0.93%/year).[40,41] Nevertheless, there were numerically fewer MIs and stent thromboses in the combined OAC and APT group. Therefore, continuation of single APT on top of OAC beyond 1 year after stenting might be preferable for patients with AF with high thrombotic and low bleeding risk. However, it is important to note that patients with AF after stenting are often elderly and, thus, are at high risk of bleeding. The average age of the patient population was 75.0 years in the present study and 74.2 years in the Danish registry.[16] Indeed, in the present study, the incidence of ISTH major bleeding was >5 times higher than that of MI. Even by the more stringent criteria of the Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction classification, the incidence of major bleeding was ≈4 times higher than that of MI, and MI was fatal in only 1 patient, whereas the bleeding was fatal in 11 patients. This finding begs the question of whether more intensive antithrombotic therapy adding APT on top of OAC could have benefits in preventing thrombotic events surpassing the associated risk of increased bleeding events. In addition, the present study showed the noninferiority of OAC alone to combined OAC and APT in terms of the major secondary end point (primary end point or major bleeding) and the post hoc ischemic or bleeding end point, suggesting that a combination of OAC and APT did not provide a net clinical benefit over OAC alone.

Another important issue on the antithrombotic therapy in patients with concomitant AF and stable CAD

Table 2. Clinical Outcomes

End Points	OAC Alone (N=344) No. of Patients With Event (Crude Incidence Rate/Annualized Event Rate, %)		Combined OAC and APT (N=346) No. of Patients With Event (Crude Incidence Rate/Annualized Event Rate, %)		Hazard Ratio (95% CI)	*P* Value for Noninferiority	*P* Value
Primary end point							
A composite of all-cause death, myocardial infarction, stroke, or systemic embolism	54	(15.7/6.4)	47	(13.6/5.5)	1.16 (0.79–1.72)	0.20	0.45
Major secondary end point							
A composite of all-cause death, myocardial infarction, stroke, systemic embolism, or ISTH major bleeding	67	(19.5/8.1)	67	(19.4/8.2)	0.99 (0.71–1.39)	0.016	0.96
Other secondary end points							
All-cause death	40	(11.6/4.6)	31	(9.0/3.5)	1.30 (0.82–2.10)		0.27
Cardiovascular death	20	(5.8/2.3)	17	(4.9/1.9)	1.18 (0.62–2.28)		0.62
Myocardial infarction	8	(2.3/0.93)	4	(1.2/0.46)	2.03 (0.64–7.59)		0.23
Stent thrombosis	2	(0.58/0.23)	0	(0.0/0.0)	NA*		0.15†
Stroke or systemic embolism	13	(3.8/1.5)	19	(5.5/2.2)	0.69 (0.33–1.38)		0.29
Stroke‡	13	(3.8/1.5)	18	(5.2/2.1)	0.73 (0.35–1.47)		0.38
Ischemic stroke	12	(3.5/1.4)	12	(3.5/1.4)	1.01 (0.45–2.27)		0.99
Hemorrhagic stroke	4	(1.2/0.46)	6	(1.7/0.69)	0.66 (0.17–2.32)		0.52
Systemic embolism	1	(0.29/0.11)	2	(0.58/0.23)	0.94 (0.81–1.09)		0.42
ISTH major bleeding	27	(7.8/3.2)	36	(10.4/4.3)	0.73 (0.44–1.20)		0.22
Fatal bleeding	7	(2.0/0.80)	4	(1.2/0.45)	1.77 (0.54–6.77)		0.35
Intracranial bleeding	9	(2.6/1.0)	14	(4.0/1.6)	0.63 (0.26–1.43)		0.27
TIMI major bleeding	17	(4.9/1.9)	29	(8.4/3.4)	0.57 (0.31–1.03)		0.07
TIMI minor bleeding	5	(1.5/0.58)	6	(1.7/0.69)	0.84 (0.24–2.78)		0.77
Hospitalization for heart failure	39	(11.3/4.7)	41	(11.8/4.9)	0.96 (0.62–1.49)		0.85
Post hoc end points							
Ischemic end point							
A composite of cardiovascular death, myocardial infarction, ischemic stroke, or systemicembolism	36	(10.5/4.2)	31	(9.0/3.6)	1.17 (0.73–1.91)	0.32	0.51
Ischemic or bleeding end point							
A composite of cardiovascular death, myocardial infarction, ischemic stroke, systemic embolism, or ISTH major bleeding	55	(16.0/6.7)	59	(17.1/7.2)	0.92 (0.64–1.33)	0.009	0.66

Data are presented as the number of patients with event, crude, and annualized incidence rates and hazard ratios with 95% CIs of OAC alone relative to combined OAC and APT for each end point by the Cox proportional hazard model. The annualized event rate represents the average number of events per patient during a 1-year period. APT indicates antiplatelet therapy; CI, confidence interval; ISTH, International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis; NA, not available; OAC, oral anticoagulation; and TIMI, Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction.

*Not available because of no event in the combined OAC and APT group.

†Assessed by the log-rank test. All other *P* values were assessed by the Cox proportional hazard models.

‡The sum of the numbers of ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke events was not necessarily equal to the number of overall stroke events because of 3 patients with both ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke in the OAC-alone group.

Table 3. Details of Patients with Myocardial Infarction

Patient Number	Age	Gender	Assigned Therapy	Years From the Last PCI	At Enrollment			Days From Enrollment	ARC Classification	STEMI	Stent Thrombosis	Fatal	At the Time of Event		
					OAC	APT	INR						OAC	APT	INR
2	78	Female	OAC alone	13.9	Warfarin		2.40	833	Spontaneous	No	No	No	Warfarin		2.41
50	80	Female	OAC alone	5.9	Warfarin		2.44	35	Spontaneous	NA	No	Yes	Warfarin		3.22
83	74	Male	OAC alone	4.8	Warfarin		1.76	447	Spontaneous	Yes	Yes	No	Warfarin		1.66
163	81	Male	OAC plus APT	6.2	Warfarin	Aspirin	2.17	288	Spontaneous	No	No	No	Warfarin	Aspirin	NA
175	73	Male	OAC plus APT	1.5	Warfarin	Aspirin	2.26	131	Spontaneous	Yes	No	No	Warfarin	Aspirin	1.58
286	77	Male	OAC plus APT	4.5	Warfarin	Aspirin	1.62	403	Spontaneous	No	No	No	Warfarin	Aspirin	2.15
289	85	Male	OAC plus APT	2.9	Warfarin	Aspirin	2.76	389	Spontaneous	No	No	No	Warfarin	Aspirin	2.01
329	80	Male	OAC alone	7.0	Warfarin		1.70	537	Spontaneous	No	No	No	Warfarin		2.87
337	82	Male	OAC alone	2.7	Warfarin		1.67	42	Spontaneous	No	No	No	Warfarin		1.31
349	77	Male	OAC alone	4.5	Warfarin		3.18	372	Spontaneous	No	No	No	Warfarin		2.07
416	81	Male	OAC alone	3.3	Warfarin		1.83	252	Spontaneous	Yes	Yes	No	Warfarin		1.62
547	74	Male	OAC alone	2.3	Warfarin		2.26	679	Spontaneous	No	No	No	Warfarin		2.03

Stent thrombosis in patient No. 83 occurred 6.0 y after implantation of a sirolimus-eluting stent, and stent thrombosis in patient No. 416 occurred 12.7 y after implantation of a bare-metal stent. APT indicates antiplatelet therapy; ARC, Academic Research Consortium; INR, international normalized ratio; NA, not available; OAC, oral anticoagulation; PCI, percutaneous coronary intervention; STEMI, ST-segment–elevation myocardial infarction.

after PCI stenting is the underuse of OAC because of concern on bleeding because APT is considered mandatory in these patients.[19,27] Indeed, in the Danish registry, 59.3% of patients were treated with APT only without OAC.[16] We should promote the use of anticoagulation in patients with concomitant AF and CAD because OAC is superior to APT in preventing thromboembolic events in patients with AF.[4,5] Furthermore, the intensity of anticoagulation tends to be less stringent in patients receiving both OAC and APT,[27] which was also observed in the present study. Therefore, implementation of OAC monotherapy might lead to better control of anticoagulation, which was reported to be associated with a lower risk for thromboembolic events.[42,43]

This trial has several important limitations. First and foremost, the number of enrolled patients was much smaller than originally designed because patient enrollment was prematurely terminated because of slow enrollment. In addition, the noninferiority margin was redefined during the course of the study to adjust for the extended follow-up period. As a result, the noninferiority of OAC alone was not met for the primary end point because of the inadequate statistical power of the study, and the trial must be considered inconclusive. Second, the noninferiority margin of 1.5 on the HR scale was large. Third, there was substantial crossover to the alternative antithrombotic regimen—12.2% in the OAC-alone group and 9.0% in the combined OAC and APT group—although most of the reasons for the crossover were considered clinically appropriate (Table I in the online-only Data Supplement). Fourth, required follow-up information was partly not prospectively collected in a standardized manner. The final follow-up data were obtained from referring physicians in 63 patients (9.3%) and by contacting 20 patients (2.9%), which might have led to some inaccuracy of those data. Fifth, the open-label trial design presumably affected the intensity of OAC toward more intensive INR control in the OAC-alone group as compared with the combined OAC and APT group. Sixth, in the present study, the predefined therapeutic INR range for elderly (≥70 years of age) patients receiving warfarin was 1.6 to 2.6 according to the Japanese guidelines, whereas the global standard INR range is 2.0 to 3.0 regardless of age. The recommendation of the lower INR control for the elderly patients in the Japanese guidelines is based on the previous reports showing high risk for bleeding, particularly intracranial hemorrhage, in elderly Asian patients.[44,45] Actually, Asian physicians prefer low-intensity INR control even in the setting of randomized controlled trials.[46,47] Seventh, the approved standard dose of rivaroxaban in Japan is 15 mg daily, while the global approved standard dose is 20 mg daily. However, the average body weight of Asian patients with AF is ≈75% of that of white patients,[31,47] leading to comparable blood concentration between Japanese patients taking 15 mg of rivaroxaban and white patients taking 20 mg of rivaroxaban.[46] Despite these differences in the OAC regimen in Japan, the incidence of stroke or systemic embolism as well as the incidence of MI observed in the present study was acceptably low—1.8%/year and 0.69%/year, respectively.

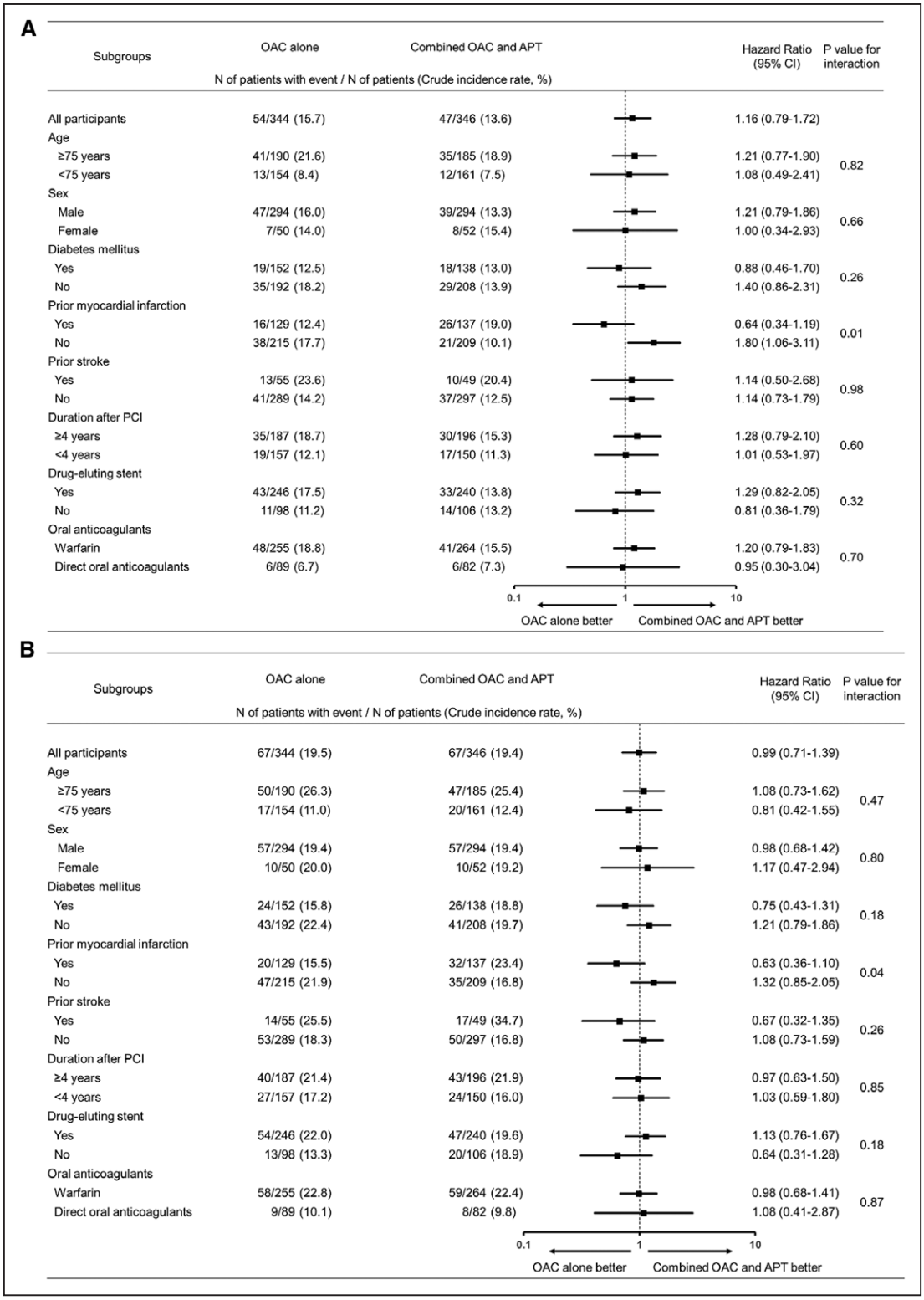


Figure 5. Prespecified subgroup analyses for the primary and major secondary end points.
A and **B**, Primary end point (a composite of all-cause death, myocardial infarction, stroke, or systemic embolism; **A**), and major secondary end point (a composite of primary end point or major bleeding; **B**). Data are presented as number of patients with event, crude incidence rates, and hazard ratios with 95% CIs of OAC alone relative to combined OAC and APT for the primary and major secondary end points. APT indicates antiplatelet therapy; CI, confidence interval; OAC, oral anticoagulation; and PCI, percutaneous coronary intervention.

Eighth, only a quarter of patients received DOACs, which have become more frequently used than warfarin.[31–35] Finally, the type of single antiplatelet agent was either aspirin or clopidogrel in the present study, leading to further heterogeneity in the antithrombotic regimen. However, in a previous large-scale randomized trial, aspirin and clopi-

dogrel provided comparable long-term cardiovascular outcomes in patients after MI.[48]

Conclusions

The present study is the first randomized trial comparing OAC alone versus combined OAC and single APT in patients with AF and stable CAD beyond 1 year after coronary stenting. However, noninferiority of OAC alone to combined OAC and APT for the composite primary end point of all-cause death, MI, stroke, or systemic embolism was not established because of inadequate statistical power. Therefore, the present trial is inconclusive and warrants future larger studies.

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Authors

Yukiko Matsumura-Nakano, MD; Satoshi Shizuta, MD; Akihiro Komasa, MD; Takeshi Morimoto, MD; Hisaki Masuda, MD; Hiroki Shiomi, MD; Koji Goto, MD; Kentaro Nakai, MD; Hisashi Ogawa, MD; Atsushi Kobori, MD; Yutaka Kono, MD; Kazuaki Kaitani, MD; Satoru Suwa, MD; Takeshi Aoyama, MD; Mamoru Takahashi, MD; Yasuhiro Sasaki, MD; Yuko Onishi, MD; Toshiaki Mano, MD; Mitsuo Matsuda, MD; Makoto Motooka, MD; Hirofumi Tomita, MD; Moriaki Inoko, MD; Takatoshi Wakeyama, MD; Nobuhisa Hagiwara, MD; Kengo Tanabe, MD; Masaharu Akao, MD; Katsumi Miyauchi, MD; Junji Yajima, MD; Keiichi Hanaoka, MD; Yoshihiro Morino, MD; Kenji Ando, MD; Yutaka Furukawa, MD; Yoshihisa Nakagawa, MD; Koichi Nakao, MD; Ken Kozuma, MD; Kazushige Kadota, MD; Kazuo Kimura, MD; Kazuya Kawai, MD; Takafumi Ueno, MD; Ken Okumura, MD; Takeshi Kimura, MD; On behalf of the OAC-ALONE Study Investigators

Correspondence

Satoshi Shizuta, MD, Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, Kyoto University Graduate School of Medicine, 54 Shogoin-Kawahara-cho, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606–8507, Japan. Email shizuta@kuhp.kyoto-u.ac.jp

Affiliations

Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, Kyoto University Graduate School of Medicine, Japan (Y.M.-N., S.S., A.K., H.S., T.K.). Department of Clinical Epidemiology, Hyogo College of Medicine, Nishinomiya, Japan (T.M.). Department of Cardiology, Kokura Memorial Hospital, Kitakyushu, Japan (H.M., K.A.). Department of Cardiology, Saitama Medical University International Medical Center, Japan (K.G.). Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, Uji Tokushukai Medical Center, Japan (K.N.). Department of Cardiology, National Hospital Organization Kyoto Medical Center, Japan (H.O., M.A.). Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, Kobe City Medical Center General Hospital, Japan (A.K., Y.F.). Kono Clinic, Kyoto, Japan (Y.K.). Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, Japanese Red Cross Otsu Hospital, Japan (K.K.). Department of Cardiology, Juntendo University Shizuoka Hospital, Izunokuni, Japan (S.S.). Division of Cardiology, Shimada Municipal Hospital, Japan (T.A.). Department of Cardiology, Shimabara Hospital, Kyoto, Japan (M.T.). Department of Cardiology, Hiratsuka Kyosai Hospital, Japan (Y.O.). Kansai Rosai Hospital Cardiovascular Center, Amagasaki, Japan (T.M.). Division of Cardiology, Kishiwada City Hospital, Japan (M.M.). Division of Cardiology, Shizuoka General Hospital, Japan (M.M.). Department of Cardiology, Hirosaki University Graduate School of Medicine, Japan (H.T.). Cardiovascular Center, The Tazuke Kofukai Medical Research Institute, Kitano Hospital, Osaka, Japan (M.I.). Division of Cardiology, Tokuyama Central Hospital, Shunan, Japan (T.W.). Department of Cardiology, The Heart Institute of Japan, Tokyo Women's Medical University, Japan (N.H.). Division of Cardiology, Mitsui Memorial Hospital, Tokyo, Japan (K.T.). Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, Juntendo University Hospital, Tokyo, Japan (K.M.). Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, The Cardiovascular Institute, Tokyo, Japan (J.Y.). Hanaoka Seishu Memorial Cardiovascular Clinic, Sapporo, Japan (K.H.). Department of Cardiology, Iwate Medical University, Morioka, Japan (Y.M.). Department of Cardiology, Tenri Hospital, Japan (Y.N.). Division of Cardiology, Saiseikai Kumamoto Hospital Cardiovascular Center, Japan (K.N.). Department of Cardiology, Teikyo University Hospital, Tokyo, Japan (K.K.). Department of Cardiology, Kurashiki Central Hospital, Japan (K.K.). Division of Cardiology, Yokohama City University Medical Center, Japan (K.K.). Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, Chikamori Hospital, Kochi, Japan (K.K.). Division of Cardiovascular Medicine, Kurume University Hospital, Japan (T.U.).

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