



Comprehensive Review

Antiplatelet Strategies Following PCI: A Review of Trials Informing Current and Future Therapies



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ABSTRACT

Dual antiplatelet therapy (DAPT) has been paramount in preventing thrombosis following percutaneous coronary intervention for nearly 3 decades. However, over the years, DAPT has seen significant changes in the agents utilized and duration of therapy as trials have raced to keep up with advancements made in stent technology and our understanding of bleeding and ischemic risk. Recently, there have been a number of trials demonstrating significant reductions in bleeding events with shorter DAPT durations, which are not yet reflected in practice guidelines. Further, there has been a shift toward more individualized antiplatelet regimens to meet patient-specific risk profiles. This review provides a comprehensive summary of the major trials that have informed current DAPT strategies, puts into context recent trials driving a shift toward more tailored antiplatelet regimens, and highlights gaps in knowledge that remain and the ongoing trials designed to address them.

Goals of antiplatelet therapy

The utility of antiplatelet agents in acute coronary syndromes (ACS) was first described by Paul Gibson in his letter "Salicylic acid for coronary thrombosis?" from 1948.¹ As plaque rupture and subsequent platelet aggregation were better understood as the pathophysiologic mechanisms behind ACS, aspirin became mainstay therapy, with large trials subsequently confirming its therapeutic benefit.² With the placement of the first coronary stents in the late 1980s, a new concern for stent thrombosis and its 5% to 45% mortality rate arose.³ Anticoagulation was first attempted to prevent this devastating complication with regimens comprising aspirin, dipyridamole, heparin, and eventually warfarin for 1 to 3 months after stent placement.⁴ In 1995, Colombo et al⁵ reported an initial experience of 359 patients who underwent Palmaz-Schatz stent placement with intravascular ultrasound optimization using only ticlopidine and/or aspirin antiplatelet therapy, pioneering both the use of intravascular ultrasound for stent dilation as

well as antiplatelet therapy without anticoagulation after stent placement. Subsequently, ticlopidine, the first P2Y₁₂ purinoceptor 12 inhibitors (P2Y₁₂i), demonstrated superior outcomes in the ISAR trial (1996) by reducing the rates of both stent thrombosis and hemorrhagic complications in comparison to anticoagulation, thereby ushering in the era of dual antiplatelet therapy (DAPT) with aspirin and a P2Y₁₂i.⁶ Ticlopidine, however, was poorly tolerated and had multiple undesirable gastrointestinal and hematologic side effects leading to its replacement with clopidogrel and then additional and more potent P2Y₁₂i, prasugrel, and ticagrelor.⁷ Since then, there has been an intense devotion to the refinement of antiplatelet therapies. Early post-percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) DAPT strategies focused on minimizing ischemic and thrombotic complications through DAPT intensification, following an increased risk of early and late stent thrombosis with first-generation drug-eluting stents (DESs).⁸ There subsequently has been a shift toward shorter and/or less intense DAPT therapy as advancements in DES technology have minimized thrombotic complications, and awareness

Abbreviations: ACS, acute coronary syndromes; DAPT, dual antiplatelet therapy; DOAC, direct oral anticoagulation; MACE, major adverse cardiovascular events; NACE, net adverse clinical events; NSTEMI, non-ST segment elevation; OAC, oral anticoagulants; P2Y₁₂i, P2Y purinoceptor 12 inhibitors; PFT, platelet function testing; SIHD, stable ischemic heart disease.

Keywords: dual antiplatelet therapy; percutaneous coronary intervention; pharmacotherapy.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jscai.2023.100607>

Received 9 December 2022; Received in revised form 10 February 2023; Accepted 13 February 2023

Available online 6 March 2023

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has grown regarding the high mortality and poor outcomes associated with bleeding post-PCI.⁹ As a result, in recent years, numerous trials have been completed or are in progress to optimize the duration of DAPT, leaving many guidelines struggling to keep up. Thus, we will describe the evidence behind current guidelines and practices and contextualize the abundance of data that has recently emerged regarding shorter and more tailored DAPT therapies with the aim of serving as an up-to-date resource for clinicians to facilitate optimizing their patients' antiplatelet regimens after PCI.

Current antiplatelet agents and evidence from the trials

Aspirin is an irreversible inhibitor of cyclooxygenase, a key enzyme for synthesizing the potent platelet aggregator thromboxane A₂. It became the first antiplatelet agent to demonstrate therapeutic benefit in ACS in 1988 when the ISIS-2 trial found 1 month of 160 mg aspirin started within 24 hours of a suspected acute myocardial infarction (AMI) resulted in a 23% relative reduction in vascular mortality and a 50% relative reduction in nonfatal reinfarction.² This led to the adoption of aspirin as the foundational therapy in the treatment of ACS, and it has remained as such in current practice guidelines. The optimal dosing of aspirin, with a 300 to 325 mg load followed by 75 to 100 mg/d, was subsequently defined in the ACS population undergoing invasive evaluation in the CURRENT-OASIS 7 trial (2010) after a maintenance dose of 75 to 100 mg/d demonstrated no difference in ischemic outcomes compared with 300 to 325 mg/d (Table 1).¹⁰

Clopidogrel is an oral, second-generation thienopyridine prodrug that requires 2-step hepatic activation by cytochrome P450 and then irreversibly inhibits the P2Y₁₂ ADP receptor. It was first used to prevent ischemic events in at-risk populations after showing superior ischemic and bleeding outcomes compared with daily aspirin 325 mg in the CAPRIE trial.¹¹ Shortly thereafter, clopidogrel demonstrated similar effectiveness to ticlopidine in preventing stent thrombosis and ischemic events 30 days post-PCI but had a superior safety profile.^{12,13} Clopidogrel's short-term efficacy was further confirmed by 2 randomized trials of 2316 patients undergoing PCI for ACS and stable ischemic heart disease (SIHD).^{14,15} The CURE trial (2001) then showed patients with non-ST-elevation (NSTEMI)-ACS, including those who underwent PCI and those who were medically managed, benefited from a longer duration of DAPT with clopidogrel for 3 to 12 months (mean 9 months) by demonstrating a 20% relative reduction in the composite of cardiovascular death, nonfatal myocardial infarction (MI), or stroke (9.3% vs 11.4%) at 12 months.¹⁶ Although this came at the expense of increased major bleeding (3.7% vs 2.7%), those who underwent PCI derived a more pronounced ischemic benefit.¹⁷ The CREDO trial (2002) then demonstrated a similar ischemic benefit with up to 12 months of clopidogrel following elective PCI.¹⁸ Following these results, clopidogrel, in conjunction with aspirin, became the preferred regimen for DAPT post-PCI. The optimal dose of clopidogrel, however, was not critically evaluated until nearly a decade later when the CURRENT-OASIS 7 trial demonstrated increased major bleeding without further ischemic benefit in over 25,000 patients with ACS undergoing invasive evaluation with double- versus single-dose clopidogrel (600 mg load followed by 150 mg/d for 6 days and 75 mg/d maintenance vs 300 mg load followed by 75 mg/d, respectively).¹⁰ Among the over 17,000 who had PCI, however, double-dose clopidogrel did show a significant reduction in stent thrombosis (1.6% vs 2.3%), contributing to current guidelines recommending a load of 600 mg in clopidogrel-naïve patients followed by 75 mg/d maintenance.^{19,20}

Prasugrel is an oral, third-generation thienopyridine prodrug that undergoes rapid activation by cytochrome P450 enzymes (compared with clopidogrel) and then irreversibly binds to the P2Y₁₂ ADP receptor.^{7,21} Due to concerns over variability in clopidogrel's pharmacologic response coupled with the more rapid and potent effects of prasugrel,

clopidogrel was compared head-to-head with prasugrel in the TRITON-TIMI 38 trial (2007).²² Compared with clopidogrel, prasugrel demonstrated fewer ischemic events (9.9% vs 12.1%; $P < .001$), with slightly more bleeding (2.4% vs 1.8%; $P = .03$) at 14 months among >13,000 patients with ACS undergoing PCI. PRINCIPLE-TIMI 44, a drug effect trial, then demonstrated that prasugrel (60 mg load, 10 mg/d maintenance) had superior platelet inhibition and antiplatelet effects compared with clopidogrel (600 mg load and 75 mg/d maintenance) in 201 patients post-PCI.²³ As a result, prasugrel became preferred over clopidogrel in the ACS population only when undergoing PCI and has remained as such in current guidelines,^{24,25} whereas clopidogrel is the preferred agent for those with SIHD, largely due to a paucity of data for the other P2Y₁₂i.^{19,20} In addition, it should be noted that prasugrel is contraindicated for patients with a history of transient ischemic attack or stroke due to an increased rate of stroke (6.5% with prasugrel vs 1.2% with clopidogrel) in TRITON-TIMI 38.

Ticagrelor is an oral cyclopentyl-triazolopyrimidine class, active, competitive inhibitor of the P2Y₁₂ ADP receptor with rapid onset and offset of platelet inhibition requiring twice daily dosing. Similar to prasugrel, ticagrelor was directly compared with clopidogrel in the PLATO trial among patients with ACS treated medically or with revascularization.²⁶ Compared with clopidogrel, ticagrelor demonstrated a significant reduction in the composite of vascular death, MI, or stroke at 1 year (9.8% vs 11.7%; $P < .001$) without an increase in major bleeding (11.6% vs 11.2%; $P = .43$) and a reduction in vascular and all-cause mortality (vascular: 4.0% vs 5.1%, $P = .001$; all-cause: 4.5% vs 5.9%, $P < .001$). Following this result, ticagrelor became a guideline-preferred P2Y₁₂i in the ACS population undergoing PCI.^{19,20} Ticagrelor was subsequently directly compared with prasugrel in an open-label, large ACS population undergoing invasive evaluation in the ISAR-REACT 5 trial (2019). In this trial, ticagrelor was associated with significantly higher ischemic events compared with prasugrel (9.3% vs 6.9%; hazard ratio [HR], 1.36; $P = .006$) without a significant difference in major bleeding (5.4% with ticagrelor and 4.8% with prasugrel; $P = 0.46$).²⁷ Ticagrelor was further associated with higher discontinuation rates due to side effects. A subsequent randomized trial of 90 subjects undergoing PCI for ACS found prasugrel, compared with clopidogrel and ticagrelor, had improved endothelial function, stronger platelet inhibition, and reduced IL-6 levels,²⁸ which may, in part, explain the physiology behind the lower ischemic event rates seen in ISAR-REACT 5. These findings have led to a change in the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) guidelines, which now prefer prasugrel over ticagrelor for patients with NSTEMI-ACS who proceed to PCI,²⁴ whereas American College of Cardiology (ACC)/American Heart Association (AHA)/SCAI guidelines continue to recommend both ticagrelor and prasugrel in ACS, including the most recent 2021 *Guidelines for Coronary Artery Revascularization*.²⁵ Currently, the ongoing SWITCH SWEDEHEART trial is comparing ticagrelor to prasugrel among a planned population of 16,000 patients with ACS (NCT05183178) and should provide further insight as to the preferred P2Y₁₂i in the ACS population.

Cangrelor is an intravenous, nonthienopyridine, active, high affinity, reversible inhibitor of the P2Y₁₂ ADP receptor with an immediate onset and very short half-life of approximately 5 minutes.²⁹ It is uniquely suited for the peri-PCI period, as it allows for immediate platelet inhibition, is given intravenously, and is quickly reversible compared with other P2Y₁₂i and glycoprotein IIb/IIIa inhibitors (GPIs).³⁰ The CHAMPION PCI and CHAMPION PLATFORM trials (2009) first evaluated cangrelor with subsequent clopidogrel monotherapy in the peri-PCI period when it was compared with clopidogrel load given either immediately before or immediately following PCI among patients with ACS and SIHD. Both trials were terminated prematurely for futility to meet the composite primary end point of death, MI, or ischemia-driven revascularization at 48 hours, driven heavily by nonfatal MI.^{31,32} Among those enrolled, however, stent thrombosis was noted to be significantly lower in the cangrelor groups. A subsequent post hoc pooled analysis

Table 1. Landmark efficacy trials on antiplatelet therapies.

Study drug	Trial	Year	Population (N)	Groups	Load: maintenance doses (duration)	Primary outcome (timepoint)	Primary outcome result	P value	Bleeding outcome	Bleeding outcome result	P value
Aspirin	ISIS-2 ²	1988	ACS (17,187)	1. S		Vascular death (5 wk)	9.2%	<.001	Bleed requiring transfusion	0.54%	<.001
				2. A	A = 160 mg/d		9.4%	<.001		0.36%	
				3. S + A	A = 160 mg/d		8.0%	<.001		0.56%	<.001
				4. Placebo			13.2%			0.26%	
Clopidogrel	CURE ¹⁶	2001	ACS (12,562)	1. C + A	C = 300 mg: 75 mg/d (3-12 mo)	CV death, MI, stroke (12 m)	9.30%	<.001	Major bleeding	3.70%	.001
				2. Placebo + A	A = 162-325 mg: 81-162 mg/d		11.40%			2.70%	
	CREDO ¹⁸	2002	Elective PCI (2116)	1. C + A	C = 300 mg: 75 mg/d (12 mo); A = 162-325 mg: 81-162 mg/d	Death, MI, stroke (12 m)	8.50%	.02	Major bleeding	8.80%	.07
				2. Placebo (C 28d) + A	C = 75 mg/d (28 d); A = 162-325 mg: 81-162 mg/d		11.50%			6.70%	
	CURRENT-OASIS 7 ¹⁰	2010	ACS (25,086)	1. C (High) + A	C = 600 mg: 150 mg/d (6 d); 75 mg/d	CV death, MI, stroke (30 d)	4.20%	.3	Major bleeding	2.50%	.01
				2. C (Low) + A	C = 300 mg: 75 mg/d		4.40%			2.00%	
				3. A (High) + C	A = 300-325 mg: 300-325 mg/d		4.20%	.61		2.30%	.9
				4. A (Low) + C	A = 300-325 mg: 75-100 mg/d		4.40%			2.30%	
Prasugrel	TRITON -TIMI 38 ²²	2007	ACS (13,608)	1. P + A	P = 60 mg: 10 mg/d (6-15 mo)	CV death, MI, stroke (15 m)	9.90%	<.001	Major bleeding	2.40%	.03
				2. C + A	C = 300 mg: 75 mg/d (6-15 mo)		12.10%			1.80%	
Ticagrelor	PLATO ²⁶	2009	ACS (18,624)	1. T + A	T = 180 mg: 90 mg twice daily	Vascular death, MI, stroke (12 m)	9.80%	<.001	Major bleeding	11.60%	.43
				2. C + A	C = 300-600 mg: 75 mg/d		11.70%			11.20%	
Ticagrelor vs prasugrel	ISAR-REACT 5 ²⁷	2019	ACS (4018)	1. T + A	T = 180 mg: 90 mg twice daily	Death, MI, stroke (12 m)	9.30%	.006	BARC major bleeding	5.40%	.46
				2. P + A	P = 60 mg: 10 mg/d		6.90%			4.80%	
Cangrelor	CHAMPION PCI ³²	2009	SIHD or ACS (8667)	1. Cg + C + A	Cg = 30 µg/kg: 4 µg/kg (2-4 h); C = 600 mg: 75 mg/d	Death, MI, IDR (48 h)	7.50%	.59	Major bleeding	3.60%	.06
				2. C + A	C = 600 mg: 75 mg/d		7.10%			2.90%	
	CHAMPION PLATFORM ³¹	2009	SIHD or ACS (5301)	1. Cg + C + A	Cg = 30 µg/kg: 4 µg/kg (2-4 h); C = 600 mg: 75 mg/d	Death, MI, IDR (48 h)	7.00%	.17	Major bleeding	5.50%	<.001
				2. C + A	C = 600 mg: 75 mg/d		8.00%			3.50%	
	CHAMPION PHOENIX ³⁰	2013	ACS (10,942)	1. Cg + C + A	Cg = 30 µg/kg: 4 µg/kg (2-4 h); C = 600 mg/300 mg: 75 mg/d	Death, MI, IDR, ST (48 h)	4.70%	.005	Severe bleeding	0.16%	.44
				2. C + A	C = 600 mg: 75 mg/d		5.90%			0.11%	

A, aspirin; ACS, acute coronary syndromes; BARC, Bleeding Academic Research Consortium; C, clopidogrel; Cg, cangrelor; CV, cardiovascular; IDR, ischemia-driven revascularization; MI, myocardial infarction; P, prasugrel; PCI, percutaneous coronary intervention; S, streptokinase; SIHD, stable ischemic heart disease; ST, stent thrombosis; T, ticagrelor.

using the Third Universal Definition of MI compared with the protocol MI definition demonstrated a significant reduction in the primary end point.³³ The CHAMPION PHOENIX trial, which included 11,000 patients undergoing urgent or elective PCI, found cangrelor at the time of PCI followed by infusion for 2 to 4 hours followed by clopidogrel was superior to clopidogrel alone, with a significant reduction in ischemic events (4.7% vs 5.9%; $P = .005$), including stent thrombosis, without a significant increase in severe bleeding.³⁰ As a result, cangrelor was approved in patients undergoing PCI if not pretreated with a P2Y₁₂i to reduce the risk of periprocedural MI, repeat coronary revascularization, and stent thrombosis.^{25,34,35}

Abciximab, Eptifibatide, and Tirofiban are intravenous direct-acting GPIs and the only alternative parenteral antiplatelet agents to cangrelor, though abciximab is no longer available in many countries (including the US). Their initial trials predated the use of P2Y₁₂i and did not improve ischemic outcomes but increased bleeding complications.^{36–38} A 2011 meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials evaluating GPIs, once the utilization of clopidogrel and ticlopidine became routine, found an association with fewer MIs, no improvement in mortality, but an increase in minor bleeding.³⁹ Though no head-to-head trials comparing cangrelor and GPIs in the immediate peri-PCI period exist, an exploratory analysis of the CHAMPION trials demonstrated no difference in ischemic outcomes between the 2 agents, with significantly higher rates of bleeding for those receiving GPIs,⁴⁰ which was also observed in a real-world patient sample undergoing PCI.⁴¹ GPI agents have, however, demonstrated the ability to decrease thrombus burden⁴²; therefore, they remain a therapeutic consideration in ACS patients undergoing PCI when a large thrombus burden exists, or there is slow flow, or no-reflow believed to be a result of distal clot embolization.^{25,35}

Finally, vorapaxar, an oral protease-activated-receptor 1 antagonist that inhibits thrombin-induced platelet activation, was evaluated as an added antiplatelet agent to patients already on DAPT following PCI to reduce ischemic events further. It was evaluated in the TRACER study (2012) and demonstrated no difference in the primary composite outcome of cardiovascular death, MI, stroke, recurrent ischemia with rehospitalization, or urgent coronary revascularization among nearly 13,000 patients with NSTEMI-ACS.⁴³ Though there was a significant reduction in the composite of cardiovascular death, MI, or stroke (HR, 0.89; 95% CI, 0.81–0.98; $P = .02$), this came at the cost of increased moderate to severe bleeding (7.2% vs 5.2%; $P < .001$) and significantly higher rates of intracranial hemorrhage (1.1% vs 0.2%; $P < .001$).

Pretreatment

Pretreatment, or the administration of a P2Y₁₂i, often as a loading dose, prior to defining coronary anatomy has been a topic of debate since P2Y₁₂i came into use. Pretreatment provides a theoretical advantage by allowing the P2Y₁₂i time to achieve the full antiplatelet effect, thereby decreasing ischemic and periprocedural thrombotic complications at the cost of increased risk for periprocedural bleeding and operative delays when coronary artery bypass graft surgery is recommended.⁴⁴

The subanalyses of the early clopidogrel trials (CREDO, CURE, and PCI-CLARITY) demonstrated mixed results for ischemic and bleeding outcomes following pretreatment among SIHD and ACS populations.^{17,18,45} The PRAGUE-8 (2008) and ARMYDA-5 PRELOAD (2010) trials evaluated clopidogrel pretreatment ~6 hours prior to angiography versus clopidogrel given in the laboratory at the time of PCI after anatomy was defined in a predominantly SIHD population; neither demonstrated an improvement in ischemic outcomes, with significantly higher rates of bleeding with preloading in PRAGUE-8 (3.5% vs 1.4%; $P = .025$) and a trend toward the same in ARMYDA-5 PRELOAD.^{46,47} Following these trials and subsequent meta-analyses,⁴⁸ preloading has generally not been recommended in the SIHD population until coronary anatomy

is defined.²⁵ The CIPAMI trial (2012) subsequently compared in-lab to out-of-hospital clopidogrel loading, which occurred on average 47 minutes prior to angiography among 337 patients with ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI). Although pretreatment did not improve the primary outcome of Thrombolysis in Myocardial Infarction (TIMI) 2/3 patency before PCI, post hoc analysis found a significant reduction in composite death, reinfarction, or revascularization at 7 days or hospital discharge (2.5% vs 7.5%; $P < .05$) with out-of-hospital clopidogrel administration.⁴⁹ This result subsequently led to pretreatment trials for the more potent P2Y₁₂i.

The ACCOAST trial (2013) evaluated pretreatment with 30 mg prasugrel and found no improvement in the composite of cardiovascular death, MI, stroke, urgent revascularization, or GPI rescue therapy at 7 and 30 days and significantly more bleeding (2.6% vs 1.4%; $P = .006$) among over 4000 patients with NSTEMI-ACS undergoing coronary angiography.⁵⁰ There was no significant difference among the cohort who ultimately underwent PCI (68.7%). The ATLANTIC trial compared out-of-hospital to in-laboratory ticagrelor loading (mean difference 31 minutes) in nearly 2000 patients with STEMI undergoing PCI. Here, there was no difference in the coprimary end points of ST-segment resolution before PCI or TIMI 3 flow but found significantly lower rates of stent thrombosis in the out-of-hospital group (0% vs 0.8% at 24 hours; 0.2% vs 1.2% at 30 days) without an increase in major bleeding.⁵¹ The DUBIUS trial (2020) recently readdressed pretreatment in the NSTEMI-ACS population with ticagrelor (average 23 hours prior to coronary angiogram) and was stopped prematurely due to futility after enrolling 1446 patients with NSTEMI undergoing an invasive evaluation; no difference was found in the composite primary outcome of vascular death, MI, stroke, or BARC (Bleeding Academic Research Consortium) 3, 4, and 5 bleeding (3.3% vs 2.9%).⁵²

Current American and European pretreatment guidelines are listed in Table 2. Both documents recommend preloading (latest at the time of PCI) of a P2Y₁₂i in the setting of STEMI with a Class 1 indication unless otherwise contraindicated due to excessive bleeding risk or if there is uncertainty regarding the diagnosis.^{53,54} In SIHD, both documents state that there is no significant evidence to support pretreatment unless anatomy is already known and PCI is planned.^{25,35} In the setting of NSTEMI myocardial infarction (NSTEMI), there has been significant evolution in the European guideline recommendations,⁵⁵ which currently recommend against routine pretreatment with unknown anatomy when an early invasive strategy is planned,²⁴ whereas the American guidelines highlight the conflicting data and state that current practice is largely to load at the time of PCI.²⁵

Current guidelines on DAPT duration following percutaneous coronary intervention

DAPT primarily serves to prevent thrombotic complications in the period of vascular healing and strut endothelialization after stent placement.⁵⁶ The sharp rise in early and late stent thrombosis seen with first-generation DES from delayed arterial healing resulted in a significant intensification of DAPT therapies during the mid-2000s and early 2010s. In addition, advancements in DES technology have now drastically improved the safety profile of contemporary DES, with complete endothelialization now achieved as early as 1 month and up to 6 months after implantation.⁵⁷ Current guidelines for DAPT duration following PCI largely come from the 2016 AHA/ACC and 2017 ESC-focused updates on DAPT, which are based on the duration of treatment used in the early large-scale DAPT trials that predominantly predate the contemporary DES era. In addition, the most recent 2021 AHA/ACC revascularization and 2020 ESC NSTEMI guidelines largely reiterate prior DAPT duration recommendations, with the addition of recommendations for patients at high bleeding risk (HBR) and considerations for earlier transition to P2Y₁₂i monotherapy. In general, both European

Table 2. Societal guidelines on P2Y₁₂ purinoceptor 12 inhibitors pretreatment.

Population	Society	Year	Recommendation class	Recommendation
STEMI	ESC	2017/2018	Class 1	Recommend potent P2Y ₁₂ i (prasugrel or ticagrelor) or clopidogrel (if prasugrel and ticagrelor are not available or contraindicated) before (or at latest at the time of) PCI unless there are contraindications such as bleeding or if STEMI diagnosis is not clear
	ACC/AHA	2013	Class 1	A loading dose of P2Y ₁₂ i should be given as early as possible or at the time of primary PCI to patients with STEMI
NSTEMI	ESC	2020	Class 3	Recommends against routine pretreatment with P2Y ₁₂ i when anatomy is unknown and early (<24 h) invasive management is planned
			Class 2b	Pretreatment with P2Y ₁₂ i can be considered when the early invasive strategy is not planned AND the patient does not have a high risk of bleeding
	ACC/AHA	2014	Class 1	A loading dose of a P2Y ₁₂ i should be given before the procedure in patients undergoing PCI with stenting
		2021	No recommendation	There are conflicting data on the benefits of pretreatment with a P2Y ₁₂ i before the anatomy is known. Currently, most undergo an early invasive angiogram with loading after anatomy is defined, which appears to offer a similar benefit to preloading
SIHD	ESC	2018	Class 1	Clopidogrel 600 mg is recommended in elective PCI once coronary anatomy is known and the decision is made to proceed with PCI
	ACC/AHA	2021	Class 2b	Pretreatment with clopidogrel may be considered if the probability of PCI is high
			No recommendation	There is no compelling evidence to support routine pretreatment with a P2Y ₁₂ i before coronary angiography when the coronary anatomy is not known

ACC, American College of Cardiology; AHA, American Heart Association; ESC, European Society of Cardiology; NSTEMI, non-ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction; P2Y₁₂i, P2Y purinoceptor 12 inhibitors; PCI, percutaneous coronary intervention; SIHD, stable ischemic heart disease; STEMI, ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction.

and American guidelines have Class 1 recommendations for 6 months of DAPT with aspirin and clopidogrel for patients with SIHD and 12 months of DAPT with aspirin and P2Y₁₂i, ticagrelor or prasugrel (AHA/ACC) or prasugrel (ESC) as the preferred P2Y₁₂i for those with all forms of ACS. See Figure 1 for a complete summary of current guidelines regarding DAPT duration.

Patients with ACS complicated by cardiogenic shock or out-of-hospital cardiac arrest represent a unique population with challenges requiring additional considerations for antiplatelet selection. Because these patients have altered P2Y₁₂i absorption, either due to inadequate

intestinal perfusion or opiate administration or from a physical lack of oral access, delays in the onset of P2Y₁₂i effects can occur and lead to adverse thrombotic events in patients already at a very high risk of thrombosis. Currently, there are no large-scale randomized trials to guide P2Y₁₂i selection in this population, and thus we are predominantly reliant on pharmacology studies which have found lower levels of platelet inhibition with the use of clopidogrel compared to ticagrelor or prasugrel.⁵⁸ The use of intravascular cangrelor has demonstrated the ability to further accelerate platelet inhibition compared to oral P2Y₁₂i agents based on nonrandomized data.^{59,60} Currently, recommendations for antiplatelet

Population Setting	Society	Year	First 12 months	Beyond 12 months
General				
SIHD	ACC/AHA	2021	A + C (6 mo)	Continued >6 mo if no HBR
			A + C	Consider P2Y ₁₂ i monotherapy (after 1-3 mo)*
	ESC	2017	A + C (6 mo)	Continued DAPT A + C
		2018	T or P considered (in place of C) in specific high-risk situations (eg, history stent thrombosis, LM PCI)	
ACS	ACC/AHA	2021	A + P or T (12 mo) C if ineligible for P or T	Consider >1 y if not at HBR
			A + C	Consider P2Y ₁₂ i monotherapy (after 1-3 mo)*
	ESC	2020	12 mo A + P or T (C if not eligible for P or T)	>12 mo if high ischemic risk and not at HBR
			A + T (3 mo)	>12 mo if moderate ischemic risk and not at HBR
High Bleeding Risk				
SIHD	ACC/AHA	2021	DAPT	Consider discontinuation of P2Y ₁₂ i (after 3 mo)
			A + C (3 mo)	
	ESC	2017	A + C (1 mo) [†]	
ACS	ACC/AHA	2021	DAPT	Consider discontinuation of P2Y ₁₂ i (after 6 mo)
			A + C (3 mo)	Consider discontinuing P2Y ₁₂ i or switch to P2Y ₁₂ i monotherapy (after 3-6 mo) [‡]
	ESC	2020	A + C (1 mo) [†]	C monotherapy (after 1 mo)
Oral Anticoagulation				
SIHD + ACS	ACC/AHA	2021/2019	Discontinue A (after 1-4 wk) and maintaining P2Y ₁₂ i (C preferred)	Stop antiplatelets at 12 mo (consider SAPT if high thrombotic + low bleed risk)**
			Choose a DOAC over warfarin to reduce the risk of bleeding	
	North American update	2021	Discontinue A ≤1 wk unless high thrombotic risk with acceptable bleeding risk	Stop P2Y ₁₂ i at 12 mo (consider 6 mo if HBR or low ischemic risk; ≥12 mo if very high ischemic risk)
			C is the preferred P2Y ₁₂ i (T can be an alternative, P should be avoided)	
	ESC	2020/2018	DOAC preferred over VKA	Discontinuation of antiplatelets at 12 mo should be considered
			Discontinue A at 1 wk (uncomplicated PCI)	
			Discontinue A between 1-4 wk (complicated PCI)	
Bioresorbable Scaffolds				
ACS	ESC	2018	12 mo DAPT	

Figure 1.**Major societal guidelines for dual antiplatelet therapy following drug-eluting stent placement.**

A, aspirin; ACC, American College of Cardiology; ACS, acute coronary syndromes; AHA, American Heart Association; C, clopidogrel; DAPT, dual antiplatelet therapy; DOAC, direct oral anticoagulants; ESC, European Society of Cardiology; HBR, high bleeding risk; P, prasugrel; P2Y₁₂i, P2Y purinoceptor 12 inhibitors; PCI, percutaneous coronary intervention; T, ticagrelor; VKA, vitamin K antagonist; SAPT, single antiplatelet therapy; SIHD, stable ischemic heart disease; LM, left main; *taking into account bleeding and ischemic risk; †, Very high bleeding risk (bleeding in the past month and/or non-deferrable surgery); ‡, Suggests cut-off of PRECISE-DAPT >25 to define high bleeding risk; **, Recommendation from 2020 ACC Expert Consensus decision pathway for anticoagulant and antiplatelet therapy in patients with atrial fibrillation or venous thromboembolism undergoing percutaneous coronary intervention with atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease.⁸⁹

Green = Class 1, Yellow = Class 2a, Orange = Class 2b.

therapies in cardiogenic shock and out-of-hospital cardiac arrest are based on the ESC joint position paper,⁶¹ which recommends prasugrel or ticagrelor over clopidogrel when there is no excess risk of bleeding and recommends intravascular antithrombotic therapy to bridge the delayed onset of oral P2Y₁₂ agents, with a preference for cangrelor given lower rates of bleeding compared to GPI agents.

Extended DAPT duration

Late (>1 year) stent thrombosis associated with first-generation DES led to the exploration of extended (>12 months) DAPT.⁸ The first major trial was the DAPT trial (2014) among 9961 patients (43% ACS), which found that extended DAPT (clopidogrel 65%, prasugrel 35%) between 12 and 30 months post-PCI significantly lowered rates of stent thrombosis and major adverse cardiac events (MACE) at the cost of significantly higher bleeding rates (2.5% vs 1.6%; $P = .001$).⁸ Subsequently, the PEGASUS-TIMI 54 trial (2015) evaluated extended DAPT with ticagrelor at 2 different doses (90 mg and 60 mg) among 21,162 patients with post-MI (83% with PCI) with 1 or more risk factors for ischemia and excluding some HBR groups.⁶² Extended DAPT with ticagrelor reduced MACE (7.85% vs 7.77% vs 9.04%; $P = .008$) but increased major bleeding 3 years post-MI (2.6% vs 2.3% vs 1.1%; $P = .004$), with the incidence of any bleeding or dyspnea being numerically lower with 60 mg compared with 90 mg. The COMPASS trial (2017) randomized almost 25,000 patients with SIHD in a 1:1:1 fashion at 12 months post-PCI to rivaroxaban at a dose of 2.5 mg twice daily with aspirin, rivaroxaban 5 mg twice daily without aspirin, and aspirin alone.⁶³ The use of rivaroxaban with aspirin was associated with reduced MACE events compared to aspirin alone at a 2-year follow-up (4% vs 6%; $P < .001$) but at the cost of increased bleeding (3% vs 2%; $P < .001$). Rivaroxaban alone did not decrease MACE compared to aspirin and had higher bleeding rates (3% vs 2%; $P < .001$).

On the basis of these trials, ESC guidelines recommend that patients without HBR and moderate (2b) or high (2a) ischemic risk (defined in Supplemental Table S1) be considered for prolonged DAPT beyond 12 months.²⁴ Similarly, the ACC/AHA made a 2b recommendation to consider prolonged DAPT beyond 12 months for patients with high ischemic risk.²⁵ For patients with SIHD at high ischemic and low bleeding risk, prolonged DAPT beyond 6 months is a 2b recommendation for both societies.^{20,25}

More recently, the HOST-EXAM trial (2021) challenged the paradigm of aspirin monotherapy following a standard duration of DAPT. Their clopidogrel demonstrated superiority compared to aspirin with fewer net adverse clinical events NACE (5.7% vs 7.7%; $P = .003$) and fewer individual thrombotic and bleeding events at 24 months when used following an uneventful 6 to 18 months of DAPT in a predominantly ACS population (5438 patients with post-PCI; 72% ACS).⁶⁴ A recently published extension to the HOST-EXAM trial, the HOST-EXAM Extended Study (2022), found this reduction in NACE persisted beyond 5 years (12.8% vs 16.9%; $P < .001$), as did the reduction in thrombotic and bleeding events within the clopidogrel treatment group.⁶⁵ Currently, the A-CLOSE trial compares clopidogrel monotherapy beyond 12 months to extended DAPT (NCT03947229).

Short DAPT in HBR

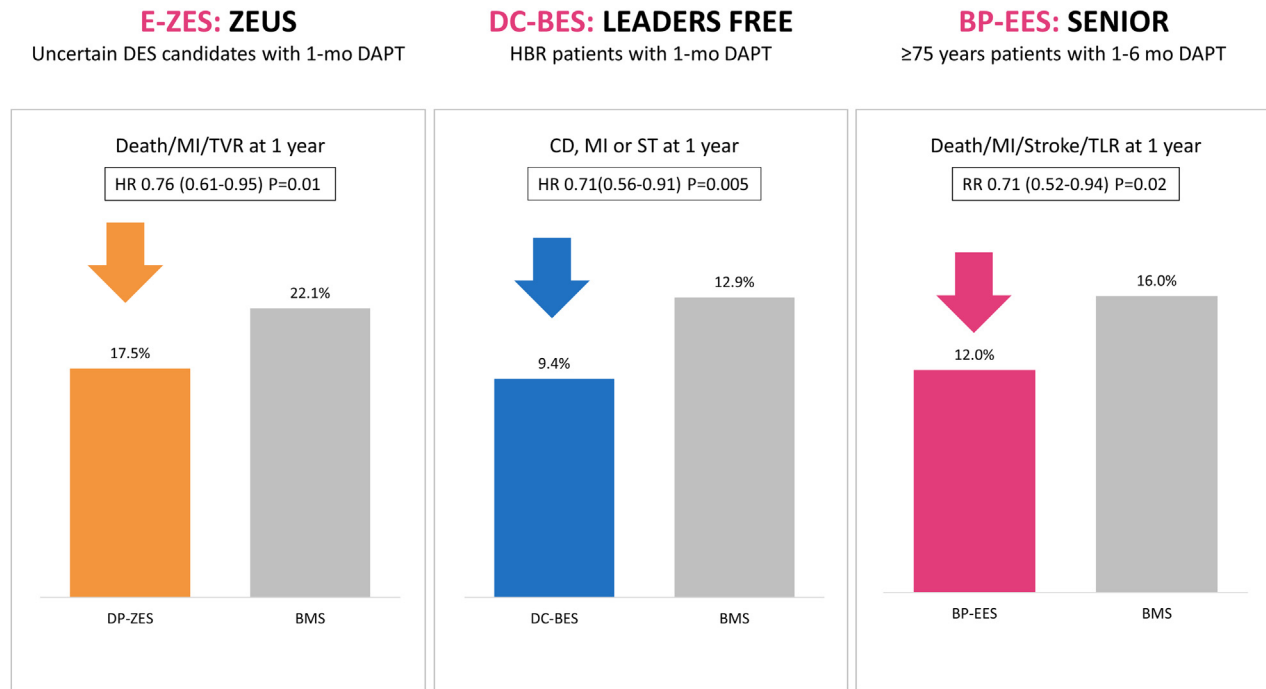
With the improved thrombotic risk profile of the newest generation of stents, derived from the use of inert fluoropolymers and reduced strut thickness, along with heightened awareness of the poor outcomes associated with bleeding after PCI,⁶⁶ the contemporary emphasis has been on minimizing bleeding events. Historically, patients with HBR were treated with bare metal stents (BMS) with 1 month of DAPT for adequate thrombotic protection. With improvements in DES, this

paradigm was challenged by 3 randomized controlled trials comparing BMS versus DES with 1 month of DAPT in patients with HBR.^{67–69} The LEADERS FREE trial (2015) compared the BioFreedom biolimus-coated stent (Biosensors) to a BMS in 2466 patients with HBR after PCI (42% ACS) randomized to 1-month DAPT (aspirin and clopidogrel) followed by aspirin alone or 12 months continued DAPT.⁶⁷ At 1 year, the Bio-Freedom stent outperformed BMS with regard to the primary end point of composite cardiac death, MI, or stent thrombosis (9.4% vs 12.9%; $P = .005$ for superiority). A prespecified subgroup analysis of 828 patients with HBR (63% ACS) from the ZEUS trial (2015) demonstrated similar findings, with the zotarolimus-eluting Endeavor Sprint stent (Medtronic) having significantly lower rates of MACE (22.6% vs 29.0%; $P = .03$) and stent thrombosis (6.2% vs 2.6%; $P = .02$) at 1 year after 30 days of DAPT compared with BMS.⁶⁸ Finally, the SENIOR trial (2018) found among 1200 elderly patients (≥ 75 years), half with ACS, that the Synergy bio-absorbable polymer DES (Boston Scientific) after 30 days of DAPT had significantly lower rates of MACE (12% vs 16%; $P = 0.02$) at 1 year compared with BMS (Figure 2).⁶⁹

Numerous studies have since set out to evaluate very short (1 month) duration DAPT in the HBR population (Table 3). To date, 6 trials have been published, all demonstrating noninferiority and/or superiority with regard to ischemic and bleeding outcomes with 1-month DAPT.^{70–75} It should be noted, however, that there exists significant variability in the design of these studies, including the use of a blanking period, evaluation for noninferiority versus superiority, and choice of a comparator arm which has included randomized and historical controls as well as performance goals. Further, although the ACS population was well captured in these trials, patients with STEMI were poorly represented, making up 0% to 7% of total participants in all but the MASTER DAPT trial, in which patients with STEMI made up 12%. Finally, although the HBR study populations did not have particularly complex coronary disease, a recent subanalysis of the MASTER DAPT trial found those with complex coronary disease and HBR had no difference in NACE nor MACE, with significantly lower bleeding after the discontinuation of either aspirin or P2Y₁₂ at 1 month.⁷⁶ There are at least 7 ongoing trials to further evaluate 1-month DAPT therapy among the HBR populations, including the COMPARE STEMI ONE trial, which plans to enroll 1608 patients with STEMI and compare 30 to 45 days of DAPT followed by prasugrel monotherapy to the currently recommended 12 months of DAPT (NCT05491200) (Table 3).

Given many of these trials were published since 2020, after the publication of most DAPT guidelines, they have not been incorporated into current recommendations, and much of the data for HBR populations comes from earlier trials that included HBR cohorts and predominantly evaluated a more conservative 3-month DAPT duration. Regardless, for the HBR population, current AHA/ACC guidelines do provide 2b recommendations to consider discontinuation of DAPT at 3 months and 6 months following PCI in SIHD and ACS populations, respectively.²⁵ The ESC guidelines similarly give 2a recommendations to discontinue DAPT at 3 months in both SIHD and ACS settings in patients with HBR and a 2a recommendation to consider stopping DAPT after 1 month when bleeding risk is considered very high (Figure 1).^{20,24} Currently, XIENCE (Abbott Vascular) and Resolute Onyx (Medtronic) stents have FDA labeling for 1-month DAPT in patients with HBR.

It is critically important to emphasize the significant overlap of patients with high bleeding and high ischemic risk, making clinical decisions regarding DAPT duration complex and requiring an individualized approach tailored to specific patient risk factors (Central Illustration). This has led to the development of multiple risk-stratifying tools to aid in decision-making, including the DAPT, PARIS (Patterns of nonadherence to antiplatelet regimen in stented patients), PARIS-DAPT, and Predicting Bleeding Complications in Patients Undergoing Stent Implantation and Subsequent Dual Antiplatelet Therapy (PRECISE-DAPT) scores, with the PRECISE-DAPT score recommended within the ESC guidelines.²⁰ Due to limitations and lack of agreement

**Figure 2.****Trials of drug-eluting stents versus BMS with 1-month DAPT.**

BMS, bare metal stent; BP-EES, biodegradable polymer everolimus-eluting stent; CD, cardiac death; DAPT, dual antiplatelet therapy; DC-BES, drug coated balloon expandable stent; DES, drug-eluting stents; E-ZES, Endeavour zotarolimus-eluting stent; HBR, high bleeding risk; HR, hazard ratio; MI, myocardial infarction; RR, rate ratio; ST, stent thrombosis; TLR, target lesion revascularization; TVR, target vessel revascularization.

between these risk scores, the Academic Research Consortium for HBR developed a consensus document to better identify and classify the factors associated with HBR among patients undergoing PCI.⁷⁷ This comprehensive list of clinical features is further classified into major and minor criteria and was validated in a population of nearly 10,000 patients with post-PCI, where being classified as HBR (at least 1 major or 2 minor criteria) corresponded to nearly 3-fold increased risk of bleeding compared to patients without HBR, and was associated with an increased rate of 1-year mortality (4.7% vs 0.6%) and MI (4.2% vs 2.0%).⁷⁸ It further demonstrated a stepwise increased risk of bleeding based on the number of times the Academic Research Consortium for HBR definition was met, with patients meeting criteria 1 time being associated with a 2-fold increased risk of bleeding and those meeting criteria 4 times having a 12-fold increased risk. With most current risk stratification tools focusing predominantly on bleeding, recent data does suggest bleeding may take precedence over ischemic risk, outside of extremes, when patients display both moderate-to-high bleeding and ischemic risk factors.⁷⁹

DAPT in atrial fibrillation

Patients requiring concomitant oral anticoagulation (OAC) and antiplatelet therapy after PCI are a unique HBR subpopulation. Initially, both OAC and DAPT were believed necessary to prevent the devastating complications of stroke, thromboembolism, and stent thrombosis in these patients who were treated with triple therapy. Triple therapy, however, is associated with a major bleeding risk of up to 16% per year.⁸⁰ With the high prevalence of atrial fibrillation in 5% to 8% of the PCI population, there was an urgent need to mitigate the excess bleeding complications.⁸¹

To date, 5 randomized controlled trials have evaluated antiplatelet therapies in the atrial fibrillation population requiring OAC. The first was the WOEST trial (2013), where 573 patients on warfarin undergoing PCI

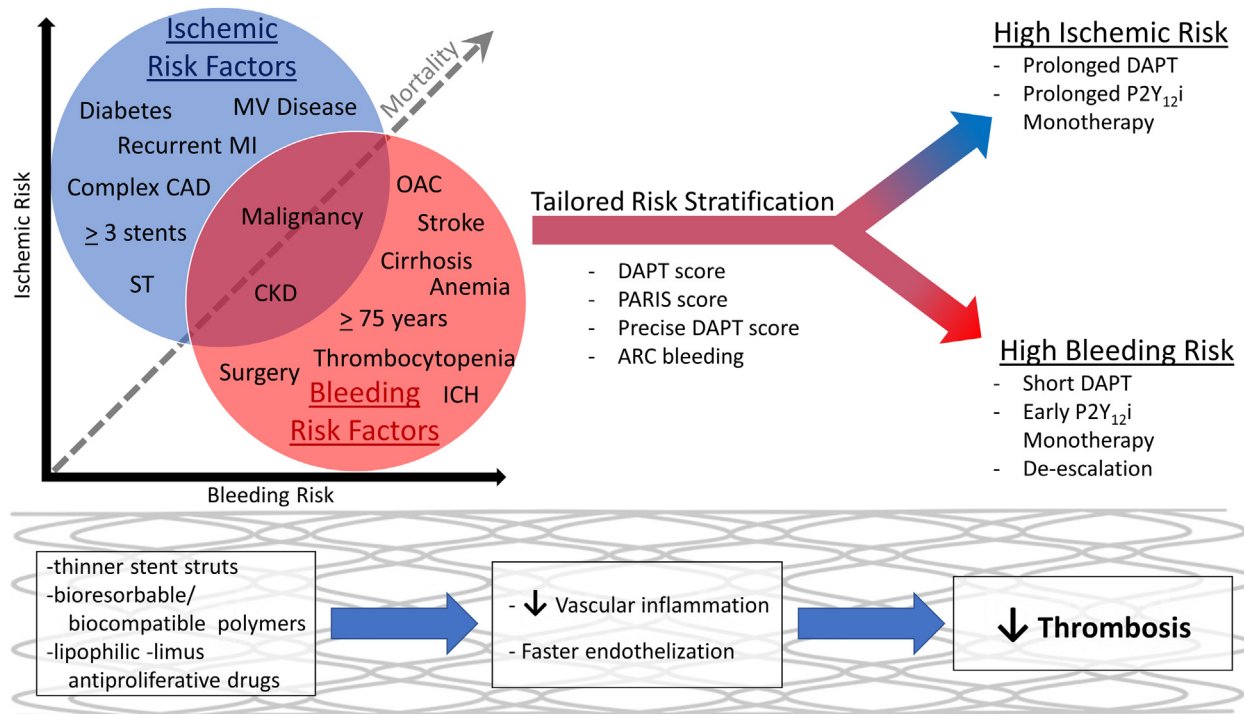
(27% of ACS) were randomized to either clopidogrel (dual therapy) or aspirin and clopidogrel (triple therapy). At 1 year, dual therapy significantly reduced bleeding (19.4% vs 44.4%; $P < .0001$) and MACE (11% vs 18%; $P = .025$) and numerically reduced stent thrombosis (1.4% vs 3.2%).⁸² With the transition to primarily direct OAC (DOAC), PIONEER-AF (2016) evaluated 2124 patients with atrial fibrillation requiring PCI (51% ACS) randomized in a 1:1:1 fashion to either: (1) Rivaroxaban (15 mg/d) plus a P2Y₁₂i for 12 months, (2) very-low-dose rivaroxaban (2.5 mg twice daily) plus DAPT for 1, 6, or 12 months, or (3) standard therapy with a dose-adjusted vitamin K antagonist (once daily) plus DAPT for 1, 6, or 12 months with clopidogrel used as the primary P2Y₁₂i in 93% to 96%.⁸¹ Rivaroxaban significantly outperformed warfarin in both the primary outcome of clinically significant bleeding (17% vs 18% vs 27% for groups 1, 2, and 3, respectively) with no significant differences in MACE or stent thrombosis. The RE-DUAL PCI (2017) trial found dual therapy with dabigatran and clopidogrel or ticagrelor had lower rates of bleeding and no difference in MACE or stent thrombosis compared with triple therapy (warfarin, a P2Y₁₂i, and 1-3 months of aspirin) in 2725 patients (50% ACS).⁸³ The ENTRUST-AF PCI (edoxaban; 2019) and the AUGUSTUS (apixaban; 2019) trials demonstrated noninferior and superior bleeding outcomes, respectively, with DOACs compared to warfarin with dual rather than triple therapy without a difference in ischemic outcomes among 1506 (52% ACS) and 4614 patients (61% ACS, 37% with and 24% without PCI), respectively (Figure 3).^{84,85} A large-scale meta-analysis of 10,234 patients evaluating the safety and efficacy of double versus triple antithrombotic therapy (>90% with clopidogrel), including the 4 aforementioned DOACs trials, demonstrated significantly lower rates of major and clinically relevant nonmajor bleeding (rate ratio [RR], 0.66; 95% CI, 0.56-0.78; $P < .0001$) without significant differences in all-cause death, cardiovascular death, or trial-defined MACE among those treated with dual therapy.⁸⁶ Notably, however, those receiving dual therapy had a borderline significantly higher rate of MI (3.6% vs 3.0%; $P = .07$) driven by the RE-DUAL PCI population and a significantly

Table 3. Summary of recent and ongoing 1-month DAPT trials in patients at HBR.

Trial (y) ^a	N ^b	ACS % (STEMI % of total population)	Comparison	DES	Design	DAPT duration study (control)	P2Y ₁₂ i	Monotherapy	Primary outcome	Timepoint	Primary outcome	P value
LEADERS FREE II (2020) ⁷⁵	1148	44% (3%)	DCS vs BMS ^c	BioFreedom	Superiority	1 m (1 m)	C preferred	A preferred	CV death, MI TLR	1 y	9.3% vs 12.4%	P = .015
Onyx ONE Global (2020) ⁷¹	1996	51% (5% to 6%)	ZES vs DCS	Resolute Onyx vs BioFreedom	Noninferiority	1 m (1 m)	87% C, 11% T, <1% P	51% A, 41% P2Y ₁₂ i	MACE	1 y	7.2% vs 9.2% 17.1% vs 16.9%	P = .034 P = .01
Onyx ONE Clear (2020) ⁷⁰	1506	49% (4%)	ZES vs OPC	Resolute Onyx	Noninferiority	1 m (12 m)	C preferred	A or P2Y ₁₂ i	CV Death, MI	1 y	7.0% vs OPC 9.7%	P < .001
XIENCE 28 (2021) ⁷²	1605	34% (0%)	EES vs EES ^c	XIENCE	Noninferiority	1 m (6 m)	86% C, 13% T, 1% P	91% A, 6% P2Y ₁₂ i	All-cause death, MI	6 mo or 12 mo	3.5% vs 4.3%	P = .0005
MASTER DAPT (2021) ⁷³	4434	59% (12%)	SES vs SES	Ultimaster	Noninferiority Noninferiority Superiority	1 m (>3 m)	80% C, 17% T, 3% P	31% A, 71% P2Y ₁₂ i (56% C)	NACE MACCE Bleeding	1 y 1 y 1 y	7.5% vs 7.7% 6.1% vs 5.9% 6.5% vs 9.4%	P < .001 P = .001 P < .001
POEM (2022) ⁷⁴	443	41% (7%)	EES vs OPC	Synergy	Noninferiority	1 m (1 m)	88% C, 10% T, <1% P	A preferred	MACE	1 y	4.82% vs OPC 9.4%	P < .001
EluNIR HBR (2021) (NCT03877848)	316	SIHD + ACS	RES vs OPC	EluNIR	Noninferiority	1 m SIHD, 3 m ACS	—	—	MACE	1 y	—	
Bioflow-DAPT (2023) (NCT04137510)	1949	SIHD + ACS	SES vs ZES	Orsiro vs Resolute Onyx	Noninferiority	1 m	—	—	MACE	1 y		
COMPARE 60/80 HBR (2023) (NCT04500912)	736	SIHD + ACS	SES vs SES	Supraflex Cruz vs Ultimaster Tansei	—	1 m	—	—	NACE	1 y		
TARGET SAFE (2023) (NCT03287167)	1720	SIHD + ACS	SES vs SES	Firehawk	Noninferiority	1 m (6 m)	—	—	NACE	1 y		
ZEVS-HBR (2025) (NCT05240781)	280	SIHD + ACS	SES vs ZES	Ultimaster vs Resolute Onyx	Noninferiority	1 m or 3 m (high ischemic risk)	—	P2Y ₁₂ i preferred	TLF	1 y		
C-MODE (2025) (NCT05320926)	3744	SIHD only	ZES vs ZES	Resolute Onyx	Superiority	1 m (HBR arm)	C	A or C	NACE	1 y		
COMPARE STEMI ONE (2026) (NCT05491200)	1608	STEMI only	—	—	Noninferiority	30-45 d (12 m)	P	P2Y ₁₂ i preferred	NACE	1 y		

A, aspirin; ACS, acute coronary syndromes; BMS, bare metal stent; C, clopidogrel; CV, cardiovascular; DAPT, dual antiplatelet therapy; DCS, drug coated stent; DES, drug-eluting stent; EES, everolimus-eluting stent; HBR, high bleeding risk; MACCE, major adverse cardiac or cerebral events (a composite of death from any cause; myocardial infarction; or stroke); MACE, major adverse cardiac events; MI, myocardial infarction; NACE, net adverse clinical events (a composite of death from any cause; myocardial infarction; stroke; or major bleeding); OPC, objective performance criteria; P, prasugrel; P2Y₁₂i, P2Y purinoceptor 12 inhibitor; RES, ridaforolimus eluting stent; SES, sirolimus-eluting stent; SIHD, stable ischemic heart disease; STEMI, ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction; T, ticagrelor; TLF, target lesion failure; TLR, target lesion revascularization; ZES, zotarolimus-eluting stent.

^a For ongoing trials, the year represents the planned completion date. ^b For ongoing trials, N represents planned enrollment. ^c Historical cohort.



Central Illustration.

Tailored antiplatelet strategies in the contemporary drug-eluting stents era. ARC, Academic Research Consortium; CAD, coronary artery disease; CKD, chronic kidney disease; DAPT, dual antiplatelet therapy; ICH, intracranial hemorrhage; MI, myocardial infarction; MV, multivessel; OAC, oral anticoagulation; P2Y₁₂i, P2Y purinoceptor 12 inhibitors; PARIS, Patterns of nonadherence to antiplatelet regimen in stented patients; ST, stent thrombosis.

higher rate of stent thrombosis (1.0% vs 0.6%; $P = .04$) driven by RE-DUAL PCI and AUGUSTUS populations. The signal for harm with dual therapy in this meta-analysis, however, was largely confined to those at otherwise very low and low bleed risk with predominantly high ischemic risk. As a result, there remains ongoing debate as to the need and duration for a brief period of triple therapy in high ischemic, low bleed risk populations for which there are actively planned and ongoing trials evaluating 7 and 30 days of triple therapy (NCT04436978) and the use of more potent P2Y₁₂i (NCT04695106).

Currently, ACC/AHA guidelines for patients on OAC undergoing PCI recommend discontinuation of aspirin at 1 to 4 weeks following PCI (Class 1)²⁵ with a 2021 North American Consensus update recommendation for ≤1-week aspirin, except with high thrombotic risk in which case aspirin should be extended to 1 month if bleeding risk is acceptable.⁸⁷ Clopidogrel is specifically identified as the preferred P2Y₁₂i in this setting, with ticagrelor being an alternative and stating prasugrel should be avoided. Similarly, the ESC guidelines recommend aspirin be discontinued in ≤1 week in SIHD and patients with ACS undergoing

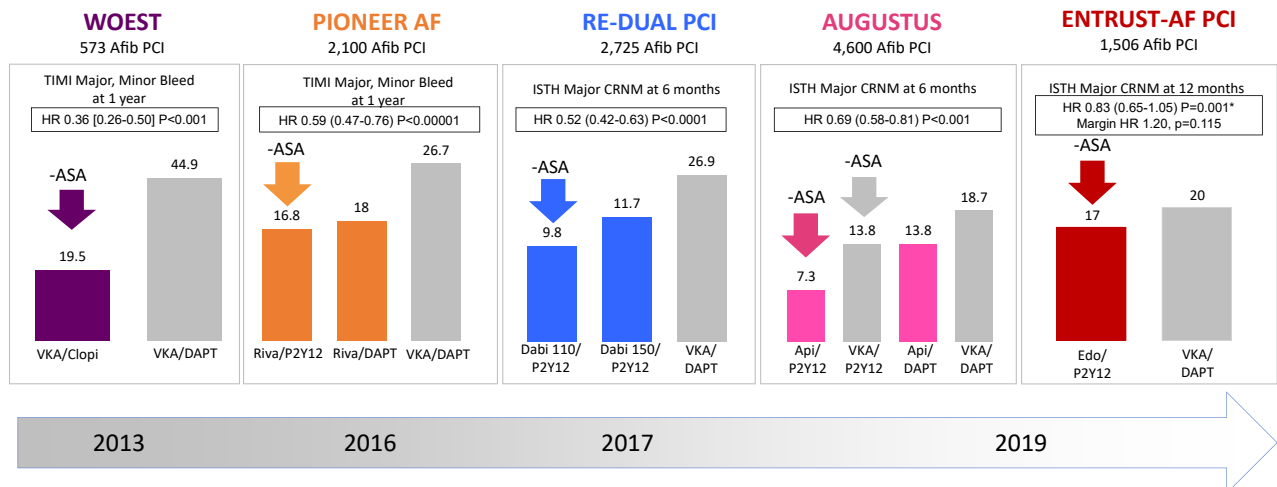


Figure 3.

Major trials of dual vs triple therapy in atrial fibrillation following percutaneous coronary intervention.

Afib, atrial fibrillation; Api, apixaban; ASA, aspirin; clopi, clopidogrel; CRNM, clinically relevant nonmajor bleeding; dabi, dabigatran; DAPT, dual antiplatelet therapy; Edo, edoxaban; HR, hazard ratio; ISTH, International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis; P2Y₁₂i, P2Y purinoceptor 12 inhibitors; PCI, percutaneous coronary intervention; riva, rivaroxaban; TIMI, thrombolysis in myocardial infarction; VKA, vitamin K antagonist. *noninferiority

uncomplicated PCI (Class 1) and between 1 and 4 weeks if the risk of stent thrombosis outweighs bleeding risk (2a) with clopidogrel as the preferred P2Y₁₂i agent.⁸⁸ Beyond 12 months, ESC guidelines, a 2020 ACC Expert Consensus document, and the 2021 North American Consensus update recommend the consideration for antiplatelet discontinuation (ESC, Class 2a).^{35,89} Both societies recommend the use of DOACs over vitamin K antagonists (ACC/AHA, 2a; ESC, 1) (Figure 1).^{25,88,90}

Short DAPT – all comers and aspirin-free strategies

Since 2011 there have been numerous studies evaluating <12-month DAPT strategies. The studies prior to 2018 predominantly evaluated 6-month DAPT durations among patients with SIHD and demonstrated significant benefits; thus, guidelines recommend 6 months of DAPT in SIHD.^{20,25} Since 2018, there have been 8 additional trials to evaluate DAPT durations of 3 months or less in predominantly all-comer populations. Throughout this period, there has been a shift from aspirin to P2Y₁₂i, specifically the more potent P2Y₁₂i, as the preferred agent for antiplatelet monotherapy. The rationale behind this shift is the thought P2Y₁₂i provides ample antithrombotic effects with a lower risk of gastrointestinal bleeding.⁹¹ Further, because aspirin has not been compared to placebo with regard to ischemic outcomes and because the early studies that led to the routine use of aspirin predate the widespread adoption of contemporary lipid-lowering therapies, the degree to which aspirin provides further ischemic benefit remains in question. In this context, 6 of the 8 trials evaluating monotherapy following 1 or 3 months of DAPT have used P2Y₁₂i (Table 4).

The 2 trials which utilized aspirin monotherapy after short DAPT were REDUCES-ACS and the ONE-MONTH DAPT trial. REDUCES-ACS (2019) evaluated 3- versus 12-month DAPT among 1460 patients with ACS (47% STEMI), and the ONE-MONTH DAPT trial (2021) evaluated 1-month DAPT among 3020 patients with SIHD or unstable angina. Both trials met noninferiority for NACE and demonstrated no differences in individual ischemic outcomes, including stent thrombosis.^{92,93}

The remaining 6 have evaluated P2Y₁₂i monotherapy after DAPT strategies of 1 month^{94–96} and 3 months.^{97–99} Among the 3-month DAPT trials, SMART-CHOICE (2019) was the first, demonstrating noninferiority for the primary end point of MACCE at 1 year (2.9% vs 2.5%; $P < .007$), with significantly lower rates of bleeding among the 3-month DAPT population in nearly 3000 patients (58% ACS; 11% STEMI) using predominantly clopidogrel (77%) as P2Y₁₂i monotherapy.⁹⁷ The 2 remaining trials of 3-month DAPT employed ticagrelor for P2Y₁₂i monotherapy and included TWILIGHT, which met superiority for the primary bleeding end point without an increase in MACE in a population of patients at high ischemic and/or bleeding risk (64% ACS; STEMI excluded),⁹⁸ and TICO, which met superiority for the primary end point NACE without a difference in the rates of MACE among a purely ACS population (36% STEMI).⁹⁹

Among the 1-month trials, the first was GLOBAL LEADERS (2018), which included nearly 16,000 patients (47% ACS) and compared ticagrelor monotherapy for 23 months to 12-month DAPT followed by aspirin monotherapy. It failed to reach superiority for the primary composite end point of all-cause death or MI at 2 years (3.8% vs 4.4%; $P = .07$), and it did not demonstrate a significant reduction in major bleeding.⁹⁴ Subsequently, STOPDAPT-2 (2019) found monotherapy with clopidogrel after 1-month DAPT was noninferior to 12-month DAPT for both NACE and MACE, with less bleeding among a population of over 3000 patients (38% ACS; 18% STEMI).⁹⁵ Finally, the most recent P2Y₁₂i monotherapy trial, STOPDAPT-2 ACS (2022), ambitiously compared 1 to 2 months of DAPT followed by clopidogrel monotherapy to 12 months of DAPT in over 4000 patients (76% ACS; 54% STEMI) but failed to demonstrate noninferiority for the primary outcome of NACE.⁹⁶

As a result of most of these studies, the most recent AHA/ACC revascularization guidelines now include 2a recommendations to consider the transition to P2Y₁₂i monotherapy after 1 to 3 months of DAPT after weighing bleeding and ischemic risks for both SIHD and ACS populations.²⁵ The 2020 ESC NSTEMI guidelines similarly state ticagrelor monotherapy can be considered after 3 months of DAPT based on the balance between bleeding and ischemic risks.⁸⁸ Although neither guideline gives explicit guidance as to which patients should specifically be considered, caution should be taken when considering 1-month DAPT outside of the HBR population, especially among those with ACS, until the ongoing studies evaluating ticagrelor and prasugrel monotherapy following 1-month DAPT among purely ACS and STEMI populations are reported (NCT03971500, NCT04753749, NCT05066789, and NCT05491200).

DAPT de-escalation and tailored therapies

DAPT de-escalation, ie, switching from a more potent P2Y₁₂i (ticagrelor or prasugrel) to either clopidogrel or a lower dose of ticagrelor or prasugrel, has been evaluated in parallel with shorter DAPT durations to optimize bleeding and ischemic events. To date, there have been 6 trials involving >500 post-PCI ACS patients evaluating DAPT de-escalation using either an unguided or a guided strategy.^{100–105} A guided de-escalation strategy is specifically one whereby de-escalation is tailored by either platelet function testing (PFT) or genetic testing to identify patients with inadequate platelet inhibition after de-escalation to prevent thrombotic complications. This strategy emerged first due to the variable responses seen with clopidogrel and CYP2C19*2/*3 loss-of-function allele carriers.^{106,107} Subsequently, PFTs and other genetic markers were also found potentially useful as means to predict thrombotic and bleeding events further.^{108,109}

For the 3 studies that have evaluated guided de-escalation, the results have been mixed. The ANTARCTIC trial (2015) was the first to test a guided strategy and randomized 877 elderly (≥ 75 years) patients with ACS (34% STEMI) to either a guided arm based on PFTs at 2 and 4 weeks following PCI or continued prasugrel 5 mg/d.¹⁰⁰ Here the guided arm (39% clopidogrel, 55% prasugrel 5 mg at 1 month) failed to demonstrate superiority for NACE at 1 year, having an identical event rate of 28% with the conventional arm and no differences in bleeding or ischemic outcomes. The TROPICAL-ACS trial (2017) subsequently evaluated PFT guidance among a larger population of 2610 patients with ACS (56% STEMI), whereby the guided group had PFT-guided maintenance DAPT with clopidogrel or prasugrel 2 weeks post-PCI compared with a control of prasugrel 10 mg and demonstrated noninferiority but not superiority for NACE, again finding no difference in bleeding or ischemic outcomes.¹⁰² Most recently, POPular Genetics (2019) employed CYP2C19 genotype-guided de-escalation from potent P2Y₁₂i (ticagrelor or prasugrel) to clopidogrel among 2488 patients with STEMI, where 61% switched to clopidogrel and again demonstrated noninferiority without superiority for NACE; however, this time investigators found significantly less bleeding (9.8% vs 12.5%; $P = 0.04$) among the guided de-escalation group.¹⁰³

Interestingly, the 3 de-escalation trials without PFT demonstrated more promising results when de-escalation occurred 1-month post-PCI. The first unguided trial, TOPIC (2017), randomized 645 patients with ACS (40% STEMI) to either clopidogrel or continued potent P2Y₁₂i therapy (prasugrel or ticagrelor) at 1 month and met superiority for the primary end point NACE at 1 year (13% vs 26%; $P > .01$), with lower bleeding and no difference in ischemic outcomes.¹⁰¹ Similarly, among a larger 2697 patients with ACS population (54% STEMI), the TALOS-AMI trial (2021) found unguided de-escalation to clopidogrel from ticagrelor at 1 month resulted in superior NACE outcomes (4.6% vs 8.2%;

Table 4. Trials evaluating ≤ 3 months of DAPT since 2018 in all comers.

Trial (y)	N	ACS % (STEMI %) of total population	Design	DAPT duration (study vs control)	DAPT P2Y ₁₂ i	Monotherapy	Outcomes primary (secondary)	Timepoint	Result	RR/HR (95% CI)	P value
GLOBAL LEADERS (2018) ⁹⁵	15,968	47% (13%)	Superiority	1 mo vs 12 mo	T vs C or T	T (24 mo)	All death or MI BARC 3 or 5	2 y	3.8% vs 4.4% 2.04% vs 2.12%	RR 0.87 (0.75-1.01) RR 0.97 (0.78-1.20)	$P = 0.07$ $P = 0.78$
REDUCE-ACS (2019) ⁹³	1460	100% (47%)	Noninferiority	3 mo vs 12 mo	41% C, 49% T, 10% P	A	NACE BARC 2, 3, or 5	1 y	8.2% vs 8.4% 3.3% vs 4.0%	— HR 0.82 (0.48-1.41)	$P < 0.001$ $P = 0.47$
STOPDAPT-2 (2019) ⁹⁶	3009	38% (18%)	Superiority	1 mo vs 12 mo	C	C	NACE Major + minor bleeding	1 y	2.4% vs 3.7% 0.41% vs 1.54%	HR 0.64 (0.42-0.98) HR 0.26 (0.11-0.64)	$P = 0.04$ $P = 0.004$
SMART-CHOICE (2019) ⁹⁸	2993	58% (11%)	Noninferiority	3 mo vs 12 mo	77% C, 19% T, 4% P	P2Y ₁₂ i	MACCE Bleeding	1 y	2.9% vs 2.5% 2.0% vs 3.4%	— HR 0.58 (0.36-0.92)	$P < 0.007$ $P = 0.02$
TWILIGHT ^a (2019) ⁹⁹	7119	64% (0%)	Superiority	3 mo vs 12 mo	T	T	BARC 2, 3, or 5 bleeding MACCE	1 y	4.0% vs 7.1% 3.9% vs 3.9%	HR 0.56 (0.45-0.68) HR 0.99 (0.78-1.25)	$P < 0.001$ $P < 0.001$
TICO (2020) ¹⁰⁰	3056	100% (36%)	Superiority	3 mo vs 12 mo	T	T	NACE TIMI major bleeding	1 y	3.9% vs 5.9% 1.7% vs 3.0%	HR 0.66 (0.48-0.92) HR 0.56 (0.34-0.91)	$P = 0.01$ $P = 0.02$
One-Month DAPT (2021) ⁹⁴	3020	39% (36%)	Noninferiority	1 mo vs 6-12 mo	93% C, 6% T or P	A	NACE Major bleeding	1 y	5.9% vs 6.5% 1.7% vs 2.5%	HR 0.90 (0.68-1.2) HR 0.69 (0.42-1.13)	$P < 0.001$ $P = 0.136$
STOPDAPT-2 ACS (2022) ⁹⁷	4169	76% (56%)	Noninferiority	1-2 mo vs 12 mo	C	C	NACE TIMI major + minor bleeding	1 y	3.2% vs 2.8% 0.5% vs 1.2%	HR 1.14 (0.80-1.62) HR 0.46 (0.23-0.94)	$P = 0.06$ —

A, aspirin; ACS, acute coronary syndrome; BARC, Bleeding Academic Research Consortium; C, clopidogrel; CV, cardiovascular; DAPT, dual antiplatelet therapy; HR, hazard ratio; MACCE, major adverse cardiac or cerebral events; MI, myocardial infarction; NACE, net adverse clinical events; P, prasugrel; P2Y₁₂i, P2Y purinoceptor 12 inhibitor; RR, rate ratio; STEMI ST-segment elevation myocardial infarction; T, ticagrelor; TIMI, thrombolysis in myocardial infarction.

^a High-risk patients (high ischemic or bleeding risk, not a purely all-comer population).

$P = .001$) and again lowered bleeding without increasing ischemic events.¹⁰⁵ Finally, in a predominantly NSTEMI-AMI population (2338 patients, 14% STEMI), the HOST-REDUCE-POLYTECH-ACS trial (2020) found unguided de-escalation to prasugrel 5 mg at 1 month was non-inferior to continued prasugrel 10 mg with respect to NACE (7.2% vs 10.1%; $P = .0007$), with lower rates of bleeding.¹⁰⁴

Based on these data, the most recent ESC NSTEMI-ACS guidelines have given a 2b recommendation to consider de-escalation from prasugrel or ticagrelor to clopidogrel for patients with ACS unsuitable for potent P2Y₁₂i, which can be done in an unguided or guided manner.²⁴ The AHA/ACC guidelines currently have not commented on de-escalation; however, a recently updated consensus statement on PFTs and genetic testing was developed in 2019.¹¹⁰ There it was noted that PFT and genetic testing should not be routinely used; however, they can be considered as a supplemental tool to assist with P2Y₁₂i tailoring in select patients. Two subsequent meta-analyses have demonstrated the benefit of guided P2Y₁₂i selection. The first included nearly 21,000 patients with SIHD and ACS who were post-PCI and found that a guided strategy led to a reduction in MACE (RR, 0.78; 95% CI, 0.63-0.95) as well as its components and a trend toward reduced bleeding (RR, 0.88; 95% CI, 0.77-1.01; $P = .069$).¹¹¹ The second study compared guided and potent P2Y₁₂i therapy with clopidogrel among nearly 62,000 patients with ACS. The guided P2Y₁₂i selection was the only approach associated with a reduction in MACE (RR, 0.8; 95% CI, 0.65-0.98) without a significant difference in bleeding.¹¹²

Switching P2Y₁₂i

Beyond de-escalation, the reassessments of ischemic and bleeding risks and numerous other factors, including cost, availability, side effects/intolerances, and the use of intravascular P2Y₁₂i, result in a need transition between P2Y₁₂i agents. Due to the different pharmacologic properties of P2Y₁₂i, concerns exist over the potential for drug-drug interactions and excessive or inadequate antiplatelet inhibition, and subsequent adverse bleeding or thrombotic events. Currently, there are limited data evaluating the optimal switching between P2Y₁₂i agents, and thus the practice of switching is largely driven by pharmacologic studies, with general recommendations for switching being discussed in detail in a 2017 International Expert Consensus document.¹¹³ In general, when transitioning between oral P2Y₁₂i in the acute/early phase (<30 days since PCI), a full-loading dose of the new P2Y₁₂i should be given 24 hours after the last dose of the former P2Y₁₂i; however, when transitioning from clopidogrel to the more potent P2Y₁₂i agents, the loading dose of ticagrelor or prasugrel should be given immediately, not 24 hours following the last dose of clopidogrel. Beyond 30 days of the index PCI, the transition between oral P2Y₁₂i agents can be done with a maintenance dose started 24 hours after the last dose of the former P2Y₁₂i, except when transitioning from ticagrelor, due to the shorter half-life, in which case a loading dose of either clopidogrel or prasugrel should be given 24 hours after the last dose of ticagrelor. When bridging to the intravascular P2Y₁₂i cangrelor from oral P2Y₁₂i agents, it is recommended there be a 4-day washout of prasugrel and a 2-day washout of clopidogrel and ticagrelor prior to initiation of the cangrelor infusion without bolus. When transitioning from cangrelor to oral P2Y₁₂i agents, it is recommended that clopidogrel or prasugrel loading doses be given immediately after, not before, the infusion is stopped; otherwise, there may be inadequate antiplatelet effect as the active metabolites are unable to bind the ADP receptor site when it is occupied by cangrelor and are subsequently excreted. Ticagrelor, however, can be given prior to termination of the cangrelor infusion as it reversibly binds at a distinct site and remains systemically available with a half-life of 8 to 12 hours without drug-drug interaction and, in real-world practice, is the most frequently utilized P2Y₁₂i with Cangrelor.^{114,115}

Conclusion

Since first incorporated into clinical practice, DAPT recommendations have seen significant change with advances in DES technology and our understanding of bleeding and ischemic risks. Although current society guidelines continue to favor reducing thrombotic/ischemic events, they have continually trended toward shorter DAPT durations for many populations and more individually tailored DAPT therapy. Based on multiple large outcomes trials, we know that patients with HBR can reduce their duration of DAPT to shorter (1-3 month) durations without incurring excessive thrombotic or ischemic risk. Further, there now exists an abundance of data and risk stratification tools to help clinicians choose antiplatelet therapies to meet more specific patient risk profiles. Though there has been an abundance of data in recent years, many questions still linger, especially among patients with mixed moderate-to-high bleeding and ischemic risks or those with comorbid atrial fibrillation requiring anticoagulation. Fortunately, there are ongoing trials to address many of these questions that will further our ability to tailor antiplatelet therapies among patients undergoing PCI.

Declaration of competing interest

Samit Shah receives research support from Women's Health Research at Yale, Abbott Vascular Inc, and the US Food and Drug Administration to support projects within the Yale-Mayo Clinic Center of Excellence in Regulatory Science and Innovation (CERSI, U01FD005938). Yuichi Saito receives honoraria from Daiichi Sankyo. Daniela Tirziu, Alaide Chieffo, Giulio Stefanini, Alexandra Lansky, Alexander Thomas, and Mauro Gitto reported no financial interests.

Funding sources

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Ethics Statement and Patient Consent

The data utilized in the production of this review article came directly from already published and publicly available sources without any identifying datapoints and therefore was exempt from IRB review.

Supplementary material

To access the supplementary material accompanying this article, visit the online version of the *Journal of the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography & Interventions* at [10.1016/j.jscai.2023.100607](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jscai.2023.100607).

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