To the Editor:

With full interest, we read the article “Should we recommend oral anticoagulation therapy in patients with atrial fibrillation undergoing coronary artery stenting with a high HAS-BLED bleeding risk score?” by Ruiz-Nodar et al. In fact, I commend the authors for conducting this highly interesting piece of research using the newly pioneered HAS-BLED risk score for estimation of bleeding risk in patients with atrial fibrillation undergoing percutaneous coronary intervention. Evidently, the late-breaking innovation of the HAS-BLED bleeding risk score has paved the way for a long-awaited new insight to patients who need long-term oral anticoagulation (OAC) therapy. No wonder then that, very shortly after its introduction, its assessment has been recommended in patients before prescribing antithrombotic therapy by both the 2010 European Society of Cardiology and 2011 Canadian Cardiovascular Society guidelines for the management of atrial fibrillation. The authors concluded that “Most patients with atrial fibrillation undergoing percutaneous coronary intervention/stenting have a high risk for major bleeding (HAS-BLED score ≥3). Even in these patients, OAC improves prognosis in these patients (reduced mortality and major adverse cardiac events) with an increase in major bleeding.”

I am deeply concerned about some methodologic aspects of the current study by Ruiz-Nodar et al. First, the study was conducted by retrospective analysis of patients enrolled during the period from January 2001 to March 2008, well before the first publication of the HAS-BLED bleeding risk score. This makes it very possible that some variables needed for the calculation of the score would be missing from the database at the time of data collection; for instance, liver function and bleeding predisposition. I wonder how labile international normalized ratio, a necessary component of the score, was assessed in all the patients. Second, as already acknowledged by the authors, the adoption of all-cause death, as a primary end point for its assessment has been recommended in patients before prescribing OAC at discharge cannot be safely attributed to an adequate anticoagulation therapy. Furthermore, the major bleeding rate was remarkably higher (hazard ratio 3.03, P=0.01).

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References

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