

**Clinical dilemma:** In patients with atrial fibrillation (AF) who survive an anticoagulation-associated intracerebral haemorrhage (ICH), a longstanding and pressing clinical dilemma is whether restarting or avoiding anticoagulation is the best long-term strategy for the prevention of recurrent stroke and systemic thrombo-embolism.

**Aim:** To provide reliable estimates of rates of non-fatal stroke or vascular death in patients with AF and recent anticoagulation-associated ICH if treated with apixaban vs. avoiding anticoagulation

**Methods:**

- Multicenter, phase II, randomised open-label clinical trial with blinded outcome assessment
- 16 centers in the Netherlands
- Main inclusion criteria:
  - ICH on anticoagulation in **previous 7-90 days**
  - CHA<sub>2</sub>DS<sub>2</sub>VASc  $\geq 2$
  - mRS  $\leq 4$
- Randomisation (1:1): apixaban 5mg twice daily *versus* avoiding anticoagulation
- Primary outcome: non-fatal stroke or vascular death
- Annual event rates with 95% CI; Kaplan-Meier survival analysis; Cox proportional hazard regression model, adjusting for one aggregated risk variable

## Results

101 participants enrolled (median age 78 years; 55 male; 28 lobar ICH)

Median duration of follow-up 1.9 years (IQR 1.0-3.1); 222 person-years of follow-up

Assigned to apixaban

Assigned to avoid anticoagulation

### Primary outcome

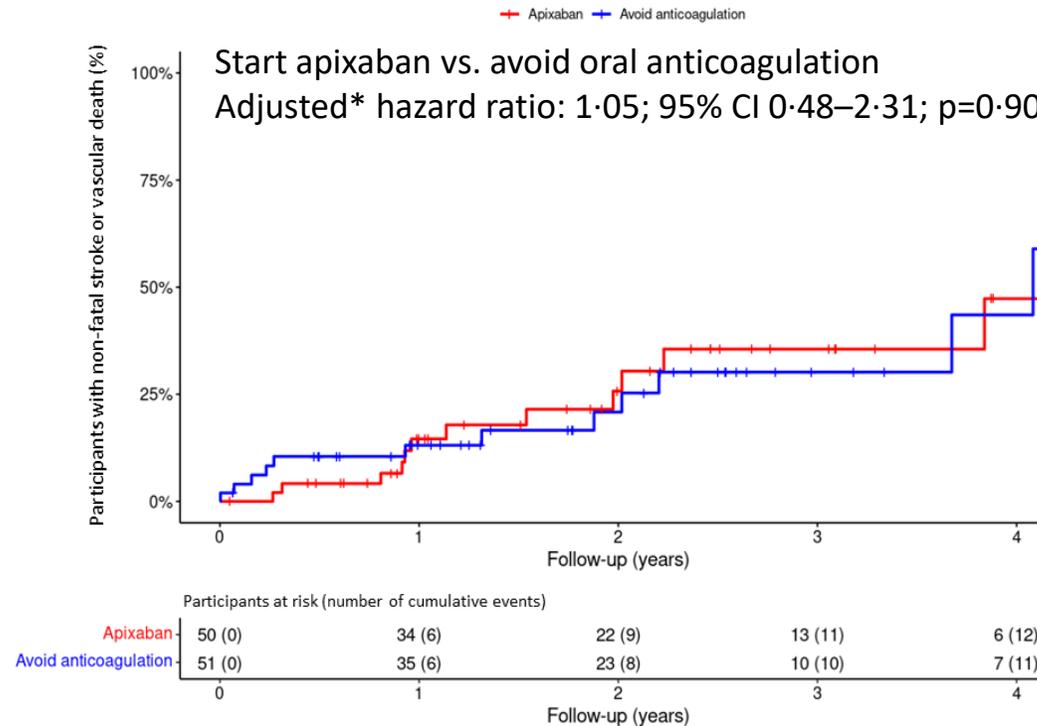
13/50 participants (4 ICH, 6 ischaemic stroke, 3 vasc death)

12/51 participants (1 ICH, 6 ischaemic stroke, 5 vasc death)

### Annual event rate

12.6 (95% CI 6.7 to 21.5)

11.9 (95% CI 6.2 to 20.8)



\*adjusted for one aggregated risk variable including age as a continuous variable and ICH location (lobar versus non-lobar)

**Conclusion:** High annual risks of non-fatal stroke or vascular death in patients with AF who had an ICH while on anticoagulation, irrespective of allocation to apixaban or to avoiding anticoagulation

**Need for large (and pooled) randomised controlled trials to determine which patients benefit most of either treatment**



**APACHE-AF**