

COMMUNICATING NUMBERS HANDOUT

Scenario:

Imagine a 70-year-old man with hypertension and diabetes who has new atrial fibrillation. You calculate a CHA2DS2-VASc score of 3, giving him a 3.2% chance of stroke per year. With a blood thinner, his risk would go down to 1.1% per year. His risk of having a major bleed requiring a hospitalization would be about 2% per year.

4 Useful Tips:

Use frequencies or percentages

- > "Your risk of having a stroke is about 3% per year."
- > "About 3 out of 100 people like you will have a stroke each year."

Avoid the 1-in-X format. Keep denominators the same

- > Worse: "About 1 out of 33 have a stroke and about 1 out of 50 have significant bleeding each year."
- > Better: "About 3 out of 100 have a stroke and about 2 out of 100 have significant bleeding each year."

Use absolute instead of relative risk

- > Terrible: "There is a 300% increased risk of stroke without a blood thinner."
- > Bad: "Your risk of stroke is tripled without a blood thinner."
- > Better: "Your risk of stroke is 3 out of 100 without a blood thinner and 1 out of 100 with a blood thinner each year."

Frame both positively and negatively

- > With this medicine, about 2 out of 100 will have serious bleeding. This also means that 98 out of 100 will not have bleeding."

