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The effects of three different
implementation strategies
for heart failure guidelines
on the management of heart
failure in New Zealand
primary care: a cluster
randomised trial

VOLUME 1

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in General Practice
The University of Auckland, 2011.

Abstract

This thesis aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of three implementation strategies on change over time in the primary care management of heart failure (HF) in New Zealand. Emergence of the Internet as a tool for continuing medical education (CME) prompted the study, which compared an Internet-based CME course, small-group education sessions and a passive mail-out of national guidelines. These were “one-off” educational interventions as is common in CME.

A single-blind stratified cluster randomised controlled trial (cRCT) design was used. Sixty nine practices were randomised to one of the three implementation strategies. The two active arms participated in almost identical education sessions based on four recommendations of the 2001 New Zealand Heart Foundation HF guideline. These recommendations were selected as primary study outcomes because their performance was suboptimal. Two of the recommendations – use of echocardiography and use of high dose angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors (ACEi) – were not new in HF management. Introduction of β -blockers to the treatment schedule illustrated a dramatic change in accepted treatment. The indication for reintroducing spironolactone for HF had changed.

Patients were identified using a HF scoring system. Twenty four practices completed the study and 359 patients participated. Retrospective data were collected from the patient cohort for up to five years.

Most echocardiograms were performed before the educational intervention. In each group, ACEi prescription decreased over time, β -blocker use increased and spironolactone use remained static. None of the three implementation strategies had a statistically significant effect on outcomes. Two patient variables that negatively predicted echocardiography referral and prescribing were older age and female sex. The increase in β -blocker prescribing was mainly attributed to initiations that occurred

in secondary care before the educational intervention. The intervention arms did not affect the dose prescribed. Older age was negatively associated with dose.

None of the implementation strategies was superior in promoting change in primary care. Changes that occurred either were negative or could be attributed to factors operating beyond the control of the study, not to education. Ongoing work is required to develop interventions that will reduce barriers to changing HF management in primary care.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my supervisors, Professor Bruce Arroll and Associate Professor Stephen Buetow for their support and in seeing this thesis through to its conclusion.

I would also like to thank the other members who initially formed the study team, Professor Ross McCormick, Associate Professor Ngaire Kerse, Associate Professor Felicity Goodyear-Smith and Mr Dennis Kerins.

My thanks also go to Elizabeth Robinson, biostatistician, who was always a delight to work with.

There were many people who helped make this study possible. Thank you to the GPs, practice managers, nurses and other practice staff, and the large proportion of patients who participated. The work of the research assistants should also be recognised. Thanks also to HealthWest and Comprehensive PHOs who allowed the study to be undertaken in their districts. I am grateful to the RNZCGP for giving the study accreditation as a continuous quality improvement activity for GPs.

This study would not have proceeded without the funding from the New Zealand Medical Education Trust, the Campbell Maclaurin and Phil Barham Fund for the Support of Research & Development in Continuing Medical Education in General Practice (Auckland Medical Research Foundation), the University of Auckland Research Committee, and the Waitemata DHB.

Thank you to friends and Departmental staff members for their help along the way.

And finally, thank you to my Mother, Björg Andersen and my husband, Richard Eriksen for their love and support (and proof-reading) throughout the PhD process.

“ . . . non confundar in aeternum.”

Table of Contents

Volume 1

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
Volume 1	v
List of Tables	xii
List of Figures	xvii
List of Abbreviations	xviii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Conceptualising the thesis	3
1.3 Structure of the Thesis	5
2. Translating Evidence into Practice	7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Guidelines and evidence-based medicine	8
2.2.1 <i>Grading systems</i>	<i>11</i>
2.2.2 <i>A description of the New Zealand Heart Failure Guideline</i>	<i>17</i>
2.2.3 <i>Primary care attitudes towards guidelines and EBM</i>	<i>20</i>
2.2.4 <i>Summary</i>	<i>22</i>
2.3 Implementing change in the primary care setting	23
2.3.1 <i>Sources of information</i>	<i>24</i>
2.3.2 <i>Credibility of sources</i>	<i>30</i>
2.3.3 <i>Format of information</i>	<i>31</i>
2.3.4 <i>Uptake of therapies without an implementation strategy</i>	<i>34</i>
2.3.5 <i>Type of GP most likely to implement change</i>	<i>36</i>
2.3.6 <i>GP and Practice characteristics</i>	<i>39</i>
2.3.7 <i>Responsibility to implement change</i>	<i>44</i>
2.3.8 <i>Summary</i>	<i>45</i>
2.4 Methods of implementation	47

2.4.1	<i>Academic detailing</i>	56
2.4.2	<i>Audit and feedback</i>	60
2.4.3	<i>Didactic lecture</i>	62
2.4.4	<i>Internet</i>	62
2.4.5	<i>Opinion leaders</i>	69
2.4.6	<i>Passive dissemination</i>	72
2.4.7	<i>Small group</i>	75
2.4.8	<i>Specialist – GP Interaction</i>	77
2.4.9	<i>Summary</i>	80
2.5	Conclusions	81
3.	Heart Failure	83
3.1	Defining heart failure	85
3.2	Determining who has heart failure	86
3.2.1	<i>Prevalence and Incidence</i>	86
3.2.1.1	Prevalence.....	87
3.2.1.2	Incidence.....	89
3.2.1.3	Knowledge of the extent of heart failure.....	90
3.2.2	<i>Patients at Risk of Heart Failure</i>	91
3.2.3	<i>Signs and Symptoms</i>	95
3.2.4	<i>Electrocardiogram</i>	97
3.2.5	<i>Chest X-Ray</i>	98
3.2.6	<i>Echocardiography</i>	99
3.2.6.1	Proportion of suspected HF patients receiving echocardiograms.....	100
3.2.6.2	Reasons given for not using echocardiography.....	102
3.2.6.3	Accuracy of echocardiography compared with clinical diagnosis....	105
3.2.6.4	Difficulties measuring echocardiograms.....	106
3.2.6.5	Provision of echocardiography reports to primary care.....	107
3.2.7	<i>Brain Natriuretic Peptide</i>	110
3.2.8	<i>Process of Diagnosis</i>	111
3.2.9	<i>Diagnosis in the Elderly</i>	116
3.2.10	<i>Summary</i>	117
3.3	Treatment of Heart Failure	118
3.3.1	<i>Trial evidence of beneficial treatment outcomes</i>	119
3.3.1.1	ACE Inhibitor Dosage.....	119
3.3.1.2	Angiotensin II Receptor Blockers.....	121
3.3.1.3	β -blockers.....	121
3.3.1.4	Spironolactone.....	123
3.3.1.5	Summary.....	124
3.3.2	<i>Comparability of HF patients in trials and in primary care</i>	124
3.3.3	<i>Actual treatment in primary care</i>	126
3.3.3.1	Examples of prescription rates.....	127
3.3.3.2	Examples of doses prescribed.....	136
3.3.3.3	Effect of age on treatment.....	137
3.3.4	<i>Secondary Care</i>	141
3.3.4.1	Diagnosis.....	141
3.3.4.2	Treatment prescription and dose.....	144
3.3.4.3	Effect of care provider.....	151
3.4	Conclusion	154

4. Methods	156
4.1 Background	156
4.1.1 <i>Primary Aim – echocardiography and medications</i>	156
4.1.2 <i>Secondary Aim – doses of interest</i>	157
4.1.3 <i>Tertiary Aim – diagnosis, initiation of new medications and electrolyte monitoring, specialist input</i>	157
4.1.4 <i>Post-hoc analyses – effect of listed HF diagnosis</i>	157
4.1.5 <i>Other – GP feedback</i>	157
4.1.6 <i>Development of the study</i>	158
4.2 General Practitioners	161
4.2.1 <i>Setting</i>	161
4.2.2 <i>Recruitment</i>	162
4.2.3 <i>Study design</i>	164
4.2.3.1 <i>Methodology and sample size</i>	164
4.2.3.2 <i>Stratification and randomisation</i>	167
4.2.4 <i>Intervention</i>	171
4.2.4.1 <i>Development and piloting of the educational intervention</i>	171
4.2.4.2 <i>Contents of the educational intervention</i>	172
4.2.4.3 <i>Implementation strategies for the educational intervention</i>	173
4.2.4.4 <i>Monitoring participation</i>	175
4.3 Defining HF in primary care	176
4.4 Identifying HF patients and data collection	179
4.4.1 <i>Search criteria to identify patients</i>	180
4.4.1.1 <i>Exclusion criteria</i>	181
4.4.2 <i>Evaluation of potential HF</i>	182
4.4.2.1 <i>Diagnosis</i>	182
4.4.2.2 <i>Contacting participants</i>	184
4.4.3 <i>Patient characteristics and management</i>	185
4.4.3.1 <i>Patient demographics</i>	185
4.4.3.2 <i>Pre-intervention data</i>	187
4.4.3.2.1 <i>Physiological variables</i>	187
4.4.3.2.2 <i>Pre-intervention medications</i>	188
4.4.3.3 <i>Post-intervention data</i>	189
4.4.3.4 <i>Current management data</i>	189
4.5 Outcomes and analysis	190
4.5.1 <i>Primary outcomes – echocardiography and medications</i>	192
4.5.2 <i>Secondary outcomes – doses of interest</i>	194
4.5.3 <i>Tertiary outcomes – diagnosis, initiation of new medications and electrolyte monitoring, practitioner responsible for prescription, and specialist input</i>	196
4.5.4 <i>Post-hoc analyses – effect of listed diagnosis</i>	198
4.5.5 <i>Other – GP feedback</i>	201
5. Results	202
5.1 GP and practice variables	202
5.1.1 <i>Practice and GP participation rate</i>	202
5.1.2 <i>GP characteristics</i>	203
5.1.3 <i>Patients recruited into the study</i>	206

5.1.4	<i>Contribution of GP / practice variables to analysis</i>	207
5.2	Patient variables	208
5.2.1	<i>Age</i>	208
5.2.2	<i>Sex</i>	208
5.2.3	<i>Ethnicity</i>	209
5.2.4	<i>Blood Pressure</i>	211
5.2.5	<i>Heart Rate</i>	211
5.2.6	<i>Electrolytes: Creatinine, Sodium, Potassium</i>	213
5.2.6.1	<i>Creatinine</i>	213
5.2.6.2	<i>Sodium</i>	214
5.2.6.3	<i>Potassium</i>	214
5.2.7	<i>Comorbidities</i>	216
5.2.8	<i>Contribution of patient variables to model</i>	218
5.3	Primary outcomes – echocardiography and medications	218
5.3.1	<i>Rates of Echocardiography</i>	219
5.3.1.1	<i>Other diagnostic tests: NT-ProBNP</i>	221
5.3.2	<i>Angiotensin inhibition</i>	222
5.3.2.1	<i>ACE inhibitors</i>	222
5.3.2.2	<i>Angiotensin II receptor blockers</i>	224
5.3.2.3	<i>Combined Angiotensin inhibition</i>	224
5.3.3	<i>β-blockers</i>	226
5.3.4	<i>Spironolactone</i>	228
5.4	Secondary outcomes – doses of interest	229
5.4.1	<i>Prescribed doses of ACE inhibitors and Angiotensin Receptor blockers</i>	230
5.4.1.1	<i>ACE inhibitors</i>	230
5.4.1.2	<i>Angiotensin Receptor blockers</i>	230
5.4.1.3	<i>Combined Angiotensin inhibition</i>	233
5.4.2	<i>Prescribed doses of β-blockers</i>	235
5.4.3	<i>Prescribed doses of Spironolactone</i>	235
5.5	Tertiary outcomes – diagnosis, initiation of new medications and electrolyte monitoring, specialist input	238
5.5.1	<i>Responsibility for diagnosis</i>	238
5.5.2	<i>Initiation of new medications</i>	240
5.5.2.1	<i>Initiation of ACEi and Angiotensin Receptor Blockers</i>	240
5.5.2.2	<i>Initiation of β-blockers</i>	241
5.5.2.3	<i>Initiation of spironolactone</i>	242
5.5.2.4	<i>Electrolyte testing and initiation of spironolactone</i>	242
5.5.3	<i>Practitioners responsible for initiating new medications</i>	245
5.5.3.1	<i>ACE inhibitors</i>	245
5.5.3.2	<i>Angiotensin Receptor Blockers</i>	245
5.5.3.3	<i>β-blockers</i>	245
5.5.3.4	<i>Spironolactone</i>	246
5.5.4	<i>Specialist input into management</i>	246
5.5.4.1	<i>Examples of letters from specialists</i>	247
5.5.4.2	<i>GP deliberation over initiating a β-blocker</i>	252
5.6	Effect of listed diagnosis	253
5.6.1	<i>Echocardiography and annotated HF diagnosis</i>	254
5.6.2	<i>Angiotensin inhibition and annotated HF diagnosis</i>	255
5.6.3	<i>β-blockers and annotated HF diagnosis</i>	256

5.6.4	<i>Spironolactone and annotated HF diagnosis</i>	257
6.	Discussion	259
6.1	Primary outcomes – echocardiography and medications	261
6.1.1	<i>Echocardiography</i>	261
6.1.2	<i>Angiotensin inhibition (ACEi and ARB)</i>	262
6.1.3	<i>β-blockers</i>	263
6.1.4	<i>Spironolactone</i>	263
6.1.5	<i>Summary</i>	264
6.2	Secondary outcomes – doses of interest	265
6.2.1	<i>Angiotensin inhibition (ACEi and ARB) dose</i>	265
6.2.2	<i>β-blocker dose</i>	266
6.2.3	<i>Spironolactone dose</i>	266
6.2.4	<i>Summary</i>	267
6.3	Tertiary outcomes – diagnosis, initiation of new medication and electrolyte monitoring, specialist input	267
6.3.1	<i>Responsibility for diagnosis</i>	268
6.3.2	<i>Initiation of new medications and electrolyte monitoring</i>	268
6.3.2.1	<i>Angiotensin inhibition</i>	269
6.3.2.2	<i>β-blockers</i>	269
6.3.2.3	<i>Spironolactone</i>	269
6.3.2.4	<i>Spironolactone and electrolyte testing</i>	269
6.3.2.5	<i>Summary</i>	270
6.3.3	<i>Practitioner initiating new medications</i>	271
6.3.3.1	<i>Angiotensin inhibition</i>	271
6.3.3.2	<i>β-blockers</i>	271
6.3.3.3	<i>Spironolactone</i>	271
6.3.3.4	<i>Summary</i>	272
6.3.4	<i>Specialist input</i>	272
6.4	Post-hoc analyses – effect of listed HF diagnosis	274
6.4.1	<i>HF in problem list and echocardiography</i>	275
6.4.2	<i>HF in problem list and angiotensin inhibition</i>	276
6.4.3	<i>HF in problem list and β-blocker</i>	276
6.4.4	<i>HF in problem list and spironolactone</i>	277
6.4.5	<i>Summary</i>	277
6.5	Practice, GP and patient populations	278
6.5.1	<i>GP and practice variables</i>	278
6.5.2	<i>Patient variables</i>	279
6.6	Update on HF management in primary care and Internet implementation research	280
6.6.1	<i>Internet-delivered interventions</i>	281
6.6.2	<i>Improving HF management in primary care</i>	283
6.6.3	<i>Back to basics: the Chronic Care Model</i>	288
6.6.4	<i>Forward to the future: reminders to CDSS</i>	293
6.6.5	<i>At a fork in the road</i>	296
6.7	Effects of implementation strategies in HF management	296
6.7.1	<i>Introduction – the different faces of randomised controlled trials</i>	297
6.7.2	<i>Study outcomes</i>	299

6.7.2.1	Echocardiography, prescriptions, doses, initiation and monitoring ..	300
6.7.2.2	HF practice register and prescriptions	301
6.7.3	<i>Practice reorganisation following educational intervention</i>	301
6.7.4	<i>Other influences on HF management</i>	303
6.7.5	<i>Participation in the study arms and effect of intervention type</i>	306
6.7.6	<i>Barriers to change</i>	309
6.8	Study strengths and weaknesses	313
6.8.1	<i>Strengths of the study</i>	313
6.8.2	<i>Weaknesses of the study</i>	316
6.8.3	<i>Lessons learnt</i>	321
6.9	Recommendations	322
6.9.1	<i>Practice recommendations</i>	322
6.9.1.1	Medical records	322
6.9.1.2	Hospital correspondence	325
6.9.2	<i>Policy recommendations</i>	326
6.9.3	<i>Research recommendations</i>	327
6.9.3.1	Secondary – primary care communication	327
6.9.3.2	Maori and other at risk populations	328
6.9.3.3	Prognosis and survival time	329
7.	Conclusion.....	330
	References	333
	Volume 2.....	1
	Appendices	3
	Appendices for Chapter 3. Heart Failure	4
3A.	<i>Heart failure defined by other guidelines</i>	5
3B.	<i>Heart failure defined by major trials</i>	8
Cooperative North Scandinavian Enalapril Survival Study	8	
Studies of Left Ventricular Dysfunction	8	
Randomised Aldactone Evaluation Study	8	
The Metoprolol CR/XL Randomised Intervention Trial in Congestive Heart Failure	8	
3C.	<i>Heart failure defined by other trials</i>	9
	Appendices for Chapter 4. Methods.....	11
4A.	<i>Initial letter of invitation to general practitioners</i>	12
4B.	<i>Survey of HF management</i>	15
4C.	<i>Sample size calculations</i>	19
4D.	<i>Details of randomisation and participation</i>	21
Guideline study arm	21	
Small group study arm	21	
Internet	22	
4E.	<i>Educational intervention</i>	23
4F.	<i>Randomisation letters sent to GPs</i>	83
4G.	<i>PRA and information sheet</i>	95

4H.	<i>Carvedilol Special Authority application form</i>	99
4I.	<i>Re-contact letter, questionnaire and second round survey</i>	101
4J.	<i>Patient mail-out pack</i>	118
4K.	<i>Boston Score sheet and completion instructions for research assistants</i> .	123
4L.	<i>Patient Demographics data collection sheet and completion instructions for research assistants</i>	132
4M.	<i>Pre- and Post-Intervention data collection sheet and completion instructions for research assistants</i>	136
4N.	<i>Current Management data collection sheet</i>	144
4O.	<i>Grouping of listed diagnoses and free text comorbidities</i>	146
4P.	<i>Coding schedule for medications and doses</i>	148
4Q.	<i>HF scoring systems</i>	152
1.	WHO criteria.....	154
2.	Framingham criteria	154
3.	NHANES	157
4.	Men born in 1913	157
5.	Walma	159
6.	Gheorghiadu	160
7.	Boston score	161
Appendices for Chapter 5. Results		164
5A.	<i>Patient numbers by GP, practice size and IPA / PHO</i>	165
5B.	<i>Expanded grouping of ethnicities</i>	168
5C.	<i>Angiotensin inhibition prescription by HF group over time</i>	169
5D.	<i>β-blocker prescription by HF group over time</i>	170
5E.	<i>Spironolactone prescription by HF group over time</i>	171
5F.	<i>Prescribed doses of ACE inhibitors</i>	172
5G.	<i>Prescribed doses of Angiotensin Receptor Blockers</i>	173
5H.	<i>Combined prescribed doses of ACEI and ARBs</i>	174
5I.	<i>Adjusted means of ACEI for recommended dose and greater</i>	175
5J.	<i>Adjusted means of ACEI and ARBs for recommended dose and greater</i> .	175
5K.	<i>Prescribed doses of β-blockers</i>	176
5L.	<i>Adjusted means of β-blockers for half to recommended dose</i>	177
5M.	<i>Prescribed doses of Spironolactone</i>	178

List of Tables

Table 2.2.a. AHCPR evidence source, levels and grades	11
Table 2.2.b. Grading system used by SIGN and NICE.....	12
Table 2.2.c. Additional grades of evidence from NICE guidelines	12
Table 2.2.d. [†] SIGN revised grading system for levels of evidence.....	14
Table 2.2.e. [†] SIGN revised system for grades of recommendations.....	14
Table 2.2.f. Level of Evidence definitions from ESC and ACC/AHA guidelines over time.....	15
Table 2.3.a. Information sources used in primary care	26
Table 2.3.b. Influences and important information sources for new drug prescribing ..	27
Table 2.3.c. Comparison of demographics of oldest and youngest GP groups	39
Table 2.3.d. Demographic differences between single-handed and group practices	41
Table 2.3.e. Comparison of practice indicators for single-handed and group practices	42
Table 2.4.a. Barriers and potential solutions.....	50
Table 2.4.b. Barriers that can impact on behaviour change and guideline adherence ...	51
Table 2.4.c. Methods used to change practice	54
Table 2.4.d. Strength of influences seen in each implementation strategy	55
Table 2.4.e. Expanded domains of Understanding, Psycho-social and cognitive, Resources, and Change in practice.....	55
Table 2.4.f. Access to and use of Internet (general and specific) over time	63
Table 2.4.g. Effect of age on use of Internet for queries about patient care	63
Table 2.4.h. Effect of sex on use of Internet for queries about patient care	64
Table 2.4.i. Information recorded in hospital letters to GPs	78
Table 3.2.a. Prevalences of HF by age in the Framingham study.....	87
Table 3.2.b. HF prevalence (determined by echocardiography LVEF≤30%) by age-bands for symptomatic patients only	87
Table 3.2.c. Prevalence of HF (expressed as per 1000 patients) in north-west London	88
Table 3.2.d. Prevalence of HF by age band for all patients, males and females.....	89
Table 3.2.e. Figures for definite HF and figures for possible HF.....	90
Table 3.2.f. Comparison of annual HF incidence rates for two studies	90
Table 3.2.g. Comparison across studies of risk factors for developing HF	93
Table 3.2.g continued. Comparison across studies of risk factors for developing HF ..	94
Table 3.2.h. Signs and symptoms thought by GPs to be most suggestive of HF.....	96
Table 3.2.i. Theoretical domains that can influence behaviour in ordering echocardiograms, initiating prescribing and increasing drug doses in HF	104
Table 3.2.j. Comparison of study definitions of impaired left ventricular systolic function	109
Table 3.2.k. Diagnostic indicators for HF specified by Euro-HF GPs	112
Table 3.2.l. Diagnostic tests used in newly diagnosed HF by CASE study GPs.....	113
Table 3.2.m. Patients with COPD, determined as having HF present or absent and medications and comorbidities.....	114

Table 3.3.a. Benefits of β -blocker treatment in HF	123
Table 3.3.b. Benefits of spironolactone treatment in HF	123
Table 3.3.c. Clinical trial enrolment criteria and application to and eligibility of community HF patients	125
Table 3.3.d. Prescription of HF drugs by diagnosis group.....	128
Table 3.3.e. Proportion of prescriptions at target doses	136
Table 3.3.f. Mean, median and recommended doses* of ACEi from the CASE study .	136
Table 3.3.g. Doses prescribed and proportion titrated to higher doses	139
Table 3.3.h. Comparison of outcomes for no ACEi and high dose ACEi	140
Table 3.3.i. Dose scale decreases or discontinuations for ACEi.....	140
Table 3.3.j. Comparison of echocardiography rates in suspected HF patients admitted to hospital	142
Table 3.3.k. Comparison of investigation rates and patient age	143
Table 3.3.l. Hospital prescription rates on discharge of ACEi and/or ARBs	145
Table 3.3.m. EuroHeart Failure study ACEi daily doses and ESC 2001 HF guidelines recommended doses	146
Table 3.3.n. Prescription rates of β -blockers by hospitalisations.....	148
Table 3.3.o. EuroHeart Failure β -blocker daily doses and ESC 2001 HF guidelines recommended doses	148
Table 3.3.p. Prescription rates of spironolactone by hospitalisation.....	149
Table 3.3.q. EuroHeart Failure ORs for receiving HF medications.....	150
Table 3.3.r. Mortality associated with ACEi prescription	150
Table 3.3.s. Differences in prescription of ACEi and β -blocker by hospital ward.....	151
Table 3.3.t. Comparison of specialist delivery of care and patient age	152
Table 4.2.a. Results by practice size of randomisation after stratification	168
Table 4.2.b. Numbers and proportions of GPs who took part in the two active intervention arms comparing the start and conclusion of the study.....	175
Table 4.2.c. Numbers and proportions of GPs who returned their PRAs comparing the start and conclusion of the study	176
Table 4.3.a. Differences in electrolyte reference values during the study	187
Table 4.5.a. Comparison of carvedilol doses achieved between clinical trials and outpatient / primary care	195
Table 4.5.b. Comparison of metoprolol succinate doses achieved between clinical trials and outpatient / primary care.....	195
Table 5.1.a. Participation rate of GPs and practices by study arm.....	203
Table 5.1.b. Table of GPs' sex and date of qualification as GP for those who had eligible HF patients	204
Table 5.1.c. Table of GPs' sex and time since graduation for non-participating GPs .	204
Table 5.1.d. Table of GPs' sex and time since graduation presented all randomised GPs	205
Table 5.1.e. 2005 RNZCGP membership survey: sex and length of practice	206
Table 5.1.f. Comparative data of vocational training.....	206
Table 5.1.g. Practices, GPs and patients in the guideline study arm	206
Table 5.1.h. Practices, GPs and patients in the small group study arm	207

Table 5.1.i. Practices, GPs and patients in the Internet study arm	207
Table 5.2.a. Baseline data (demographics, clinical characteristics) for entire patient sample, then by intervention arm for age, sex and ethnicity.....	210
Table 5.2.b. Pre- and post-intervention blood pressures (systolic and diastolic) and heart rates	212
Table 5.2.c. Median values for electrolytes measured pre-intervention and post-intervention	215
Table 5.2.d. Comorbidities recorded at the time of data collection	217
Table 5.3.a. Patients receiving first-time echocardiogram over time	219
Table 5.3.b. Reported results for the 209 first-time echocardiograms.....	220
Table 5.3.c. Overall ACE inhibitor prescription over time.....	222
Table 5.3.d. ACE inhibitor prescription over time for each study arm.....	222
Table 5.3.e. Changes in ACEi prescription between time periods for each group	223
Table 5.3.f. ARB prescription over time.....	224
Table 5.3.g. Combined ACEi and ARB prescription over time.....	225
Table 5.3.h. Prescription of combined Angiotensin inhibition for each study group over time.....	225
Table 5.3.i. Changes in prescription of angiotensin inhibitors between time periods (raw and adjusted data)	226
Table 5.3.j. Overall β -blocker prescription over time.....	226
Table 5.3.k. β -blocker prescription over time for each study arm	227
Table 5.3.l. Changes in β -blocker prescription over time for each group.....	228
Table 5.3.m. Spironolactone prescription for all groups over time	228
Table 5.3.n. Spironolactone prescription rates for each arm over time	229
Table 5.4.a. Comparison of ACE inhibitor doses prescribed in pre-intervention, post-intervention and at 3 years after intervention.....	231
Table 5.4.b. Comparison by study arm of ACE inhibitor doses prescribed in pre-intervention, post-intervention and at 3 years after intervention	231
Table 5.4.c. Comparison of ARB doses prescribed in pre-intervention, post-intervention and at 3 years after intervention	232
Table 5.4.d. Comparison by study arm of ARB doses prescribed in pre-intervention, post-intervention and at 3 years after intervention.....	232
Table 5.4.e. Comparison of ACE inhibitor and ARB doses prescribed in pre-intervention, post-intervention and at 3 years after intervention	234
Table 5.4.f. Comparison by study arm of ACE inhibitor and ARB doses prescribed in pre-intervention, post-intervention and at 3 years after intervention.....	234
Table 5.4.g. Comparison of β -blocker doses prescribed in pre-intervention, post-intervention and at 3 years after intervention.....	236
Table 5.4.h. Comparison by study arm of β -blocker doses prescribed in pre-intervention, post-intervention and at 3 years after intervention	236
Table 5.4.i. Comparison of spironolactone doses prescribed in pre-intervention, post-intervention and at 3 years after intervention.....	237
Table 5.4.j. Comparison by study arm of spironolactone doses prescribed in pre-intervention, post-intervention and at 3 years after intervention	237
Table 5.5.a. New and total prescriptions for ACEi pre- and post-intervention	240

Table 5.5.b. New and total prescriptions for ARBs pre- and post-intervention.....	240
Table 5.5.c. New and total prescriptions for ACEi and ARBs pre- and post-intervention	241
Table 5.5.d. New and total prescriptions for β -blockers pre- and post-intervention ...	242
Table 5.5.e. New and total prescriptions for spironolactone pre- and post-intervention	242
Table 5.5.f. Number of doctors who initiated prescriptions of ACE inhibitors.....	245
Table 5.5.g. Number of doctors who initiated prescriptions of ARBs.....	245
Table 5.5.h. Number of doctors who initiated prescriptions of β -blockers	245
Table 5.5.i. Number of doctors who initiated prescriptions of spironolactone.....	246
Table 5.6.a. Timing of listed HF diagnosis by intervention study arm.....	254
Table 5.6.b. Rates of echocardiography (adjusted) by HF group	254
Table 5.6.c. Analysis of variables for echocardiography and HF group.....	255
Table 5.6.d. Angiotensin inhibition prescription (adjusted) by HF group	255
Table 5.6.e. Analysis of variables for angiotensin inhibition and HF group	256
Table 5.6.f. β -blocker prescription (adjusted) by HF group	257
Table 5.6.g. Analysis of variables for β -blocker prescription and HF group	257
Table 5.6.h. Spironolactone prescription (adjusted) by HF group	258
Table 5.6.i. Analysis of variables for spironolactone prescription and HF group	258
Table 6.6.a. Comparison of intervention and control education for guideline adherence	284
Table 6.6.b. A comparison of drugs entered into template, CDSS suggestions and GP changes.....	295
Table 6.9.a. Examples of prescribing indicators that could be useful for HF.....	323

Volume 2

Table 4D.i. CHS/Comprehensive GPs and practices randomised and participating	21
Table 4D.ii. IPCS/HealthWest GPs and practices randomised and participating.....	21
Table 4D.iii. CHS/Comprehensive GPs and practices randomised and participating ...	21
Table 4D.iv. IPCS/HealthWest GPs and practices randomised and participating	22
Table 4D.v. CHS/Comprehensive GPs and practices randomised and participating	22
Table 4D.vi. IPCS/Health West GPs and practices randomised and participating	22
Table 4Q.i. WHO criteria for HF diagnosis.....	154
Table 4Q.ii. Framingham criteria for the diagnosis of HF.....	155
Table 4Q.iii. Calculations for Framingham criteria from the Rotterdam Study	156
Table 4Q.iv. HF present or absent by Framingham score and comparative EF	156
Table 4Q.v. Calculations for NHANES criteria from the Rotterdam Study.....	157
Table 4Q.vi. Scoring system for HF from Men born in 1913.....	158
Table 4Q.vii. Calculations for Men born in 1913 criteria from the Rotterdam Study .	158
Table 4Q.viii. Walma HF scoring system.....	159
Table 4Q.ix. Calculations of diagnostic accuracy for Walma criteria	159

Table 4Q.x. Calculations for Gheorghiade criteria	160
Table 4Q.xi. Criteria for scoring the certainty of HF diagnosis, the Boston score	161
Table 4Q.xii. Relationship between clinical classification and LVEF	162
Table 4Q.xiii. Calculations for Boston score from the Rotterdam Study	162
Table 5A.i. Patients per GP for CHS/Comprehensive guideline arm.	165
Table 5A.ii. Patients per GP for IPCS/HealthWest guideline arm.	165
Table 5A.iii. Patients per GP for CHS/Comprehensive small group arm.....	166
Table 5A.iv. Patients per GP for IPCS/HealthWest GPs in the small group arm.....	166
Table 5A.v. Patients per GP for CHS/Comprehensive Internet study arm.....	167
Table 5A.vi. Patients per GP for IPCS/HealthWest Internet study arm.	167
5B.i. Reported ethnicities for all patients who participated in the study.	168
Table 5C.i. Timing of diagnosis and Angiotensin inhibitor prescription, pre-intervention	169
Table 5C.ii. Timing of diagnosis and Angiotensin inhibitor prescription, post-intervention	169
Table 5C.iii. Timing of diagnosis and Angiotensin inhibitor prescription, current management	169
Table 5D.i. Timing of diagnosis and β -blocker prescription, pre-intervention	170
Table 5D.ii. Timing of diagnosis and β -blocker prescription, post-intervention.....	170
Table 5D.iii. Timing of diagnosis and β -blocker prescription, current management ..	170
Table 5E.i. Timing of diagnosis and spironolactone prescription, pre-intervention....	171
Table 5E.ii. Timing of diagnosis and spironolactone prescription, post-intervention .	171
Table 5E.iii. Timing of diagnosis and spironolactone prescription, current management	171
5F.i. ACEi doses prescribed over time, all dose scales.....	172
5F.ii. ACEi doses prescribed over time by each study arm, all dose scales	172
5G.i. ARB doses prescribed over time, all dose scales	173
5G.i. ARB doses prescribed over time by each study arm, all dose scales.....	173
5H.i. ACEi and ARB doses prescribed over time, all dose scales	174
5G.i. ACEi and ARB doses prescribed over time by each study arm, all dose scales .	174
5I.i. Adjusted means and 95%CI for ACEi guideline-recommended dose and higher by study arm and time period.....	175
5J.i. Adjusted means and 95%CI for ACEi and ARBs at guideline-recommended dose and higher by study arm and time period.....	175
5K.i. β -blocker doses prescribed over time, all dose scales.....	176
5K.ii. β -blocker doses prescribed over time by each study arm, all dose scales	176
5L.i. Adjusted means and 95%CI for β -blockers at half to guideline-recommended dose by study arm and time period.....	177
5M.i. Spironolactone doses prescribed over time, all dose scales	178
5M.ii. Spironolactone doses prescribed over time by each study arm, all dose scales	178

List of Figures

Figure 4.1.a. Study Timeline.....	160
Figure 4.2.a. Flow chart detailing the process of recruitment and follow up	163
Figure 4.2.b. Flowchart of recruitment of practices and GPs. Practice and GP numbers at the start, randomisation, participation and conclusion of the study.....	170
Figure 5.3.a. Note regarding cost of BNP tests, recorded on test results from late 2005	221
Figure 5.5.a. Example from patient 001003 regarding ACE inhibitor and β -blocker ..	247
Figure 5.5.b. Example from patient 135003 regarding ACEi dose and blood pressure	247
Figure 5.5.c. Patient 135003 further adjustments to medications	248
Figure 5.5.d. From patient 057006. Electrolyte testing advised after spironolactone and benefits of β -blocker emphasised.....	248
Figure 5.5.e. Less informative letter regarding management of patient 057006	249
Figure 5.5.f. Detailed letter to GP of patient 101005 at the end of 2001	249
Figure 5.5.g. Detailed follow-up letter regarding patient 101005.....	249
Figure 5.5.h. Details of patient's symptoms, possible causes and the steps the cardiologist took, including reinforcing patient education, and re-iteration of evidence	250
Figure 5.5.i. Cardiologist indicating the steps that they will take to manage the patient (054003)	250
Figure 5.5.j. Vague management recommendations from the hospital cardiologist....	251
Figure 5.5.k. Instruction to GP to commence spironolactone.....	251
Figure 5.5.l. Reasoning for not introducing β -blocker in an 'elderly' patient (057004)	251
Figure 5.5.m. Instructions given to GP on increasing ACEi dose	251
Figure 5.5.n. GP's notes considering the initiation of β -blocker in a patient	252
Figure 5.5.o. Initiating a β -blocker still in the forefront of management for this patient	252

List of Abbreviations

ACC	American College of Cardiology
ACEi	Angiotensin Converting Enzyme inhibitor
AGREE	Appraisal of Guidelines Research and Evaluation (Instrument)
AHA	American Heart Association
AHCPR	Agency for Health Care Policy and Research – now the AHRQ
AHRQ	Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality – formerly the AHCPR
ARB	Angiotensin Receptor Blocker
BMI	Body Mass Index
BNF	British National Formulary
BNP	Brain Natriuretic Peptide (see also NT-Pro BNP)
CABG	Coronary Artery Bypass Graft
CFPC	The College of Family Physicians of Canada
CHD	Coronary Heart Disease
CI	Confidence Interval
CME	Continuing Medical Education
COPD	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
cRCT / cRT	cluster Randomised Controlled Trial / cluster Randomised Trial
CTR	Cardio Thoracic Ratio
CXR	Chest X-Ray
DHB	District Health Board (NZ)
DM	Diabetes Mellitus
DTB	Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin
EBM	Evidence-Based Medicine
ECG	Electrocardiograph / Electrocardiography / Electrocardiogram
Echo	Echocardiograph / Echocardiography / Echocardiogram
EF	Ejection Fraction
ESC	European Society of Cardiology
GP	General Practitioner
HF	Heart Failure
IPA	Independent Practitioner Association (NZ) became PHO
JVP	Jugular Venous Pressure
LV	Left Ventricle / Ventricular

LVD	Left Ventricular Dysfunction
LVEF	Left Ventricular Ejection Fraction
LVF	Left Ventricular Failure
LVFx	Left Ventricular Function
LVSD	Left Ventricular Systolic Dysfunction
LVSFx	Left Ventricular Systolic Function
MI	Myocardial Infarction
MIMS	Monthly Index of Medical Specialities
NICE	National Institute for Clinical Excellence or since April 2005 National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence.
NPV	Negative Predictive Value
NT-ProBNP	N-Terminal-Prohormone Brain Natriuretic Peptide (see also BNP)
NYHA	New York Heart Association
NZGG	New Zealand Guidelines Group
OR	Odds Ratio
Pharmac	Pharmaceutical Management Agency (NZ)
PHO	Primary Health Organisation (NZ) previously IPA
PPV	Positive Predictive Value
PTCA	Percutaneous Transluminal Coronary Angioplasty
RAAS	Renin Angiotensin Aldosterone System
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
RNZCGP	Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners
SIGN	Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network