Anticoagulation with warfarin is a relatively safe and effective means of preventing life-threatening thrombotic events. However, it is essential that the dosage is adequately and carefully controlled. In South Africa many clinicians have insisted on using the prothrombin index (PI) to adjust warfarin dosages. This procedure does not comply with international practice, where the PI has been replaced by the international normalised ratio (INR). At a Standardisation Meeting held under the auspices of the Southern African Society of Thrombosis and Haemostasis in Johannesburg October 2006, in response to major clinical complications, it was agreed that all coagulation laboratories in South Africa would no longer issue PI reports. The only measurements that will be reported are the INR, partial thromboplastin time (PTT) (patient) and PTT (control). This directive will, it is hoped, reduce the major complications that have occurred as a result of poor communication between laboratories and clinicians. Clinicians who are not in a position to anticoagulate their patients with warfarin using the INR are advised to refer these patients to an anticoagulation clinic. Anticoagulation clinics have been and are being set up both in the private and government sectors. The Southern African Society of Thrombosis and Haemostasis sub-committee has established guidelines for these clinics, and they are included in this issue of the SAMJ.

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