

## *A new star*

*From a Journal Correspondent*

On 26 and 27 April 1976 a meeting took place at the Royal College of General Practitioners of the new European General-Practice Research Workshop. Dr E. V. Kuenssberg was in the Chair, and Dr P. Pedersen (Denmark) was elected Vice-Chairman and Dr G. Dorrenboom (Holland) Honorary Secretary. The meeting was attended by general practitioners from Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland, Norway, the United Kingdom, and West Germany, apologies being received from Austria, East Germany, Hungary, and Sweden. This was the third meeting of its kind since 1971, but whereas the previous meetings had been concerned with constitutional problems, in London this year it was finally decided to operate a loosely supportive European organisation, open to representatives of any academic general-practice organisation from any European country, and/or individual researchers accredited through Societas Internationalis Medicinae Generalis (S.I.M.G.).

### *Aims*

The aims of the European General-Practice Research Workshop were agreed as follows:

“To encourage research, to foster and co-ordinate multi-national studies, to exchange experience and in particular to develop a validated international scientific basis for general practice.”

### *Method of working*

Several small working groups were set up during the meeting to initiate research projects to be developed throughout Europe. These will endeavour:

- (a) To collect baseline information on health care in each country so that comparisons can be made about different clinical and organisational problems,
- (b) To analyse practice activity,
- (c) To report common diseases and study the different ways of reaching a diagnosis in the different countries,
- (d) To foster international European co-operation through the system of spotter or sentinel practices.

Many difficulties face these groups and they are compounded by being set against a background of different national systems of health care. However, it is hoped that the results will lead to a deeper understanding about how and why we practise medicine, and that these comparisons of our activities will be to the ultimate benefit of our patients.

This new star which has appeared low down on our horizon may as yet be only dimly perceived; it will have a low trajectory across our firmament far out in the medical universe and be slow in progress; yet it will shine brightly. The general practitioners of Europe, who have been so patient and persistent in its pursuit, are to be congratulated on its discovery.