

published shortly. In summer there were more babies born with pulmonary stenosis and aortic stenosis, rectal and anal atresia, and partial absence of limbs, whilst in winter more babies had cataract, anencephaly, spina bifida, oesophageal atresia and congenital dislocation of the hip. Seasonal variation has previously been noted in anencephaly, spina bifida, and congenital dislocation of the hip. These findings will be submitted to more detailed examination by mechanical analysis. Studies of regional variation, secular trend, and, possibly more important, the grouping of defects in the individual patients will also be made.

This project has taken longer to complete than anticipated at first but a great amount of work has been necessary. The thalidomide tragedy gives the study of congenital abnormalities added interest and importance.

This kind of study is ideal for general practitioners to undertake for it depends on the notification of cases as they occur and does not require complete details in every case; indeed, the investigation is not put in jeopardy by the omission of an occasional notification nor are "nil" reports asked for.

THE RECORDS AND STATISTICAL UNIT

Although for over 150 years collective enquires into illness and epidemics have been made occasionally by family doctors and others, only recently has a study been made of the methods best suited for this kind of work. In the pages which follow much useful advice on general-practitioner research will be found. These papers emanate from the research committee of Council, and are the first fruits of the Records and Statistical Unit. Council owes a deep debt of gratitude to Dr R. J. F. H. Pinsent whose inspiration and untiring work brought the unit into being. On the 6 April 1963 Council learnt of a grant of £6,000 per annum for three years from the Nuffield Foundation to enable the unit to establish itself as a working part of the College's research activities. Council is confident that at the end of three years the research foundation of the College will be able to finance the unit and by appointing Dr Pinsent as its first director they have done all that is in their power to ensure its success.