Medical meetings

The venue for national and international scientific meetings is important and the choice of attractive venues abroad has given many paediatricians a chance to visit countries which they would not otherwise have seen, to make much valued friends with people abroad, and to understand better the problems of other nations. International understanding is helped just as paediatric science is advanced by widening its boundaries. It is important, however, that no society gets itself onto a treadmill in which each meeting has to be better and more lavish than the preceding one. We suspect that many paediatricians, particularly those who are sponsored to attend a meeting or who receive travel grants from institutional funds or from charities, feel rather guilty when the social programme and other arrangements are too lavish. We believe that most paediatricians attending a meeting are prepared to work hard during that meeting and therefore need good facilities for it. However splendid it might be to visit the Alps in winter or an Aegean island in the spring, unless there are good modern lecture theatres with satisfactory audiovisual facilities and unless there is some cheap accommodation which allows the less well off to attend, such places are inappropriate for paediatric meetings. In Europe one of the happiest developments of the past 15 years has been the number of new European societies covering paediatric specialties ranging from nephrology and cardiology to education and child psychiatry. These are immensely popular societies and have a high scientific standing. We hope that the organisers will be able to maintain that scientific standing and will manage to resist the tendency for the meetings to become more lavish, more expensive, and to be staged in places that are more appropriate for playboys than paediatricians.