

a commitment of individual and institutional spirit and resources which must be worked out by each Regional Medical Program. It is facilitated by voluntary agreements to serve, systematically, the needs of the public as regards the categorical diseases on a regional rather than some more narrow basis.

Regionalization, or a regional cooperative arrangement, within the context of Regional Medical Programs has several other important facets:

- It is both functional and geographic in character. Functionally, regionalization is the mechanism for linking patient care with health research and education within the entire region to provide a mutually beneficial interaction. This interaction should occur within the operational activities as well as in the total program. The geographic boundaries of a region serve to define the population for which each Regional Program will be concerned and responsible. This concern and responsibility should be matched by responsiveness, which is effected by providing the population with a significant voice in the Regional Program's decision-making process.
- It provides a means for sharing limited health manpower and facilities to maximize the quality and quantity of care and service available to the Region's population, and to do this as economically as possible. In some instances, this may require inter-regional cooperation between two or among several Regional Programs.
- Finally, it also constitutes a mechanism for coordinating its categorical program with other health programs in the Region so that their combined effect may be increased and so that they contribute to the creation and maintenance of a system of comprehensive health care within the entire Region.

*Because the advance of knowledge changes the nature of medical care, regionalization can best be viewed as a continuous process rather than a plan which is totally developed and then implemented.* This process of regionalization, or cooperative arrangements, consists of at least the following elements: involvement, identification of needs and opportunities, assessment of resources, definition of objectives, setting of priorities, implementation, and evaluation. While these seven elements in the process will be described and discussed separately, in practice they are interrelated, continuous and often occur simultaneously.

*Involvement*—The involvement and commitment of individuals, organizations and institutions which will engage in the activity of a Regional Medical Program, as well as those which will be affected by this activity, underlie a Regional Program. By involving in the steps of study and decision all those in a region who are essential to implementation and ultimate success, better solutions may be found, the opportunity for wider acceptance of decisions is improved, and implementation of decisions is achieved more rapidly. Other