

Program to consider the total array of resources within its Region in relationship to a comprehensive program for the care of the myocardial infarction patient. Thus, what was a concern of individual hospitals about how to introduce coronary care units has been transformed into a project or group of related projects with much greater potential for effective and efficient utilization of the Region's resources to improve patient care.

*Assessment of Resources*—As part of the process of regionalization, a Region continuously updates its inventory of existing resources and capabilities in terms of function, size, number and quality. Every effort is made to identify and use existing inventories, filling in the gaps as needed, rather than setting out on a long, expensive process of creating an entirely new inventory. Information sources include state Hill-Burton agencies, hospital and medical associations, and voluntary agencies. The inventory provides a basis for informed judgments and priority setting on activities proposed for development under the Regional Program. It can also be used to identify missing resources—voids requiring new investment—and to develop new configurations of resources to meet needs.

*Definition of Objectives*—A Regional Program is continuously involved in the process of setting operational objectives to meet identified needs and opportunities. Objectives are interim steps toward the Goal defined at the beginning of this section, and achievement of these objectives should have an effect in the Region felt far beyond the focal points of the individual activities. This can be one of the greatest contributions of Regional Medical Programs. The completion of a new project to train nurses to care for cancer patients undergoing new combinations of drug and radiation therapy, for example, should benefit cancer patients and should provide additional trained manpower for many hospitals in the Region. But the project also should have challenged the Region's nursing and hospital communities to improve generally the continuing and in-service education opportunities for nurses within the Region.

*Setting of Priorities*—Because of limited manpower, facilities, financing and other resources, a Region assigns some order of priority to its objectives and to the steps to achieve them. Besides the limitations on resources, factors include: 1) balance between what should be done first to meet the Region's needs, in absolute terms, and what can be done using existing resources and competence; 2) the potentials for rapid and/or substantial progress toward the Goal of Regional Medical Programs and progress toward regionalization of health resources and services; and 3) Program balance in terms of disease categories and in terms of emphasis on patient care, education and research.

*Implementation*—The purpose of the preceding steps is to provide a base and imperative for action. In the creation of an initial operational program, no Region can attempt to determine all of the program objectives possible, design appropriate projects to meet all the objectives and then assign priorities before seeking a grant to