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Charge to Participants, Arthritis Conference

This month marks the end of the first six months of the special activities arthritis/program developed last fiscal year by the Division of Regional Medical Programs of the Health Resources Administration, DHEW. Under this program a total of ____ separate arthritis ~~projects~~ projects in 29 different RMPs are receiving support for one year in the total amount of \$4.4 million.

This new program has been designed to improve the comprehensiveness and quality of services delivered to patients with arthritis, to identify earlier and more completely all those who require treatment, and to educate more fully all those who either provide or receive treatment or who secondarily are affected by the arthritic patient and/or the disease. Although developed under the sponsorship of and ~~supported~~ supported by the Federal Government, from its inception the Federal sponsors of this program have sought and received

the cooperation of the National Arthritis Foundation, the relevant professional societies including the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons who are one of the sponsors of the present conference, the National Steering Committee of the Regional Medical Programs as well as the individual Regional Medical Programs, and key individuals in the field of arthritis and rheumatology. Invitations to participate in the initial and continuing development of this program, including the present conference, were extended to the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases, and at this time I wish to acknowledge our gratitude for that Institute's support during the initial stages of the program's development.

Assembled here today we may view ourselves as a heterogenous group of arthritis project directors, concerned laymen, health service providers, regional medical program coordinators, consumers voluntary agency representatives and at least one involved Federal official. What is it that we wish to accomplish in this two-day

meeting? What are our common needs and how ~~WEXE~~ can we structure our activities and processes over the coming months in order that we may together benefit from each others experiences. Can we not, at this time, through joint endeavors bring into being a coherent, cohesive and meaningful national program of demonstration arthritis activities which will measure up to the potential we all know it to have and thus to merit the further support which surely as individual directors and concerned citizens you will seek as you attempt to meet the needs of the people within your individual communities?

As Cicero said, "The punishment of those who are too wise to become involved in the affairs of government is to leave the affairs of government to and be governed by the unwise"--Let us not shirk this opportunity to address ourselves to difficult issues and to take those steps which good sense dictate are necessary if this

~~THE~~ small but potentially vital new national initiative by the Federal government into the improved management of the arthritics among us in our own communities is not to become just another memory of a flash in the pan, though noble, spurt of the Federal conscience.

The future of this program lies in your hands--and the purpose of calling this conference is to provide you with the opportunity to meet one another, to discuss and argue jointly in your workshops, the ~~pe~~ plenary sessions and over coffee as to ~~wh~~ how you can organize yourselves and your activities so as to evolve out this fledgling, struggling and short-term supported effort a sense of common purpose and national goals which will form the basis for a long-term, stable national program effort ~~wh~~ which will enrich the nation's health delivery system.

With the passage of the National Health Planning and Development Act

of 1974, the future of the National Regional Medical Program has been clearly determined, and you may no longer look to this program for certainty of continued support. Thus, the prime task of this conference is to move the--your--present program into one of national visibility and importance based upon perceived and demonstrated merit, and to assist thereby in accelerating the improvements in management of arthritis which are called for under the newly passed Public Law 93-640 sponsored by Senator Cranston.

Many individuals, groups and organizations have worked diligently and effectively to bring forth the ^{element} ~~present~~ small but important program which is represented here today by your collective presence. The future of it, though unclear in all particulars, is not necessarily bleak if, through this conference you take those steps which clearly must be taken to assume for yourselves leadership responsibilities for its further growth, development and effectiveness.

In closing, let me express my gratitude to all of you for making it possible to arrange this conference and to wish you well in your deliberations.