



New Zealand

Association of Gerontology

Te Ropu Matauranga Kaumatua o Aotearoa

DECEMBER 2009

Editorial - Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

Kia ora tatou. Welcome to the last newsletter for 2009. As incoming President of the NZAG, I stand on the shoulders of giants. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the good governance the Wellington Branch, and individual Executive members, provided in hosting the National Executive over the past four years.

As the new Auckland-based National Executive steps into its role on behalf of NZAG members, it is timely to consider the objects of the Association. Two objects stand out. Firstly, "to promote and disseminate quality gerontological research." The NZAG conference is the major way your Association achieves this objective. Over 400 delegates assembled at the Wellington Convention Centre to engage in over 100 presentations on the 7th – 9th October 2009. Collaborating with Age Concern New Zealand for this event contributed to its overwhelming success. Now it is time to mark your calendars for the next major conference event. As a member country of the Asia/Oceania Region of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG), the NZAG is a supporting partner of the four-yearly Asia/Oceania Regional Congress to be held in Melbourne on the 23rd to 27th October 2011. The congress theme is **Ageing well together: Regional perspectives**. New Zealand researchers will be represented amongst the keynote speakers and symposia members. This means there will be no NZAG conference held in New Zealand in 2011. Instead, we will be doing all we can to promote your participation in this significant regional congress in Melbourne. You can register your interest now to receive updates on the congress www.ageing2011.com. The next NZAG conference is scheduled for 2012. Watch for more information as the planning unfolds.

The second object I note is "to stimulate public interest and promote action in all matters related to improving the quality of life and wellbeing of older people." Given the context of New Zealand's ageing society, this objective gains unprecedented importance. We take this responsibility seriously.

Two recent opportunities were taken to raise our political voice. The NZAG released a press statement on the ACC decision to discontinue funding for the Otago Exercise Programme, the highly successful falls-prevention programme. Also, a submission was made to the Ministry of Health draft consultation document on the "Food & Nutrition Guidelines for Healthy Older People: A background paper."

Information on NZAG activities will be posted on the website and we welcome correspondence from all members and Branches related to things the NZAG might do toward **improving the quality of life and wellbeing of older people**.

Dr Valerie Wright-St Clair

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*Dr Valerie Wright-St Clair,
National President NZAG*

Aims of the Association

- To stimulate interest and action in all matters concerning the welfare of older people.
- To encourage the training of those caring for older people.
- To act as advisors to interested persons, bodies or groups on aspects of ageing.
- To study ageing in all its forms, and to promote gerontological research.

NZiRA 2009 Visitor Report



Prof. Alan Walker

Professor Alan Walker accepted an invitation to be the 2009 Visiting Fellow to NZiRA. His visit to New Zealand took place in October 2009, with generous funding assistance from the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation. His visit concludes a significant series of events in the last nine years, during which NZiRA helped New Zealand researchers, policy makers, students, business groups and community organisations become engaged in issues relating to ageing populations.

Previous visitors to NZiRA were funded by a five year sponsorship with TOWER: Professor Anthea Tinker (2001), Professor Jordan Kosberg (2002), Professor Norah Keating (2003), Professor Tom Kirkwood (2004) and Mrs Mary Davies (2005). In 2006, Southern Cross were the sponsors for NZiRA visitor Patti Moore. From 2007-2009, the VUW Foundation supported visits by Dr Hilary Arksey in late 2008, Associate Professor Michael Fine in early 2009, and Professor Walker in October 2009.

During his visit, Professor Walker gave the opening Keynote address to the 2009 Conference of the New Zealand Association of Gerontology and Age Concern New Zealand. His topic for that address was Active Ageing: its promise and potential. There is a link to an initial report on the conference at <http://www.ageconcern.org.nz/safety/conference-2009>, and his address will be available there and via www.gerontology.org.nz in due course. He also gave several media interviews. Those with Kim Hill and with the One in Five programme will have audio downloads available through Radio New Zealand. In the days after the conference, Professor Walker also contributed to three separate events in Wellington, arranged by NZiRA through the Institute of Policy Studies.

1. He spoke to a Ministry of Social Development Forum and four local commentators responded. They covered issues in housing, health, human rights and social policy. That presentation, "Population Ageing: The research-policy interface", will be available on the new NZiRA pages within the Institute of Policy Studies website in December 2009. www.ips.ac.nz
2. At a meeting hosted by the Retirement Commissioner, he spoke on "European Approaches to Pension Sustainability". A videocast of that talk is being prepared for access at www.retirement.org.nz.

3. The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) held a Round Table meeting with a small group of invited participants. It began with a short outline of a discussion paper prepared by Dr Judith Davey and Dr Sally Keeling - Support and caring for dependent older people: how should responsibility be shared? Professor Walker then made a valuable commentary outlining some of the ways this question is being addressed in the UK and Europe. The IPS group plans to continue this discussion in 2010, as part of IPS plans to keep issues relating to population ageing on the agenda for public debate, research and policy development.

Those who were able to hear Professor Walker speak found interest, challenge and knowledge, based on his global experience in the UK (as Director of the UK New Dynamics of Ageing Research Project), in Europe (where he is Director of the European Research Area in Ageing), and internationally (as an advisor to the UN on the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and WHO on active ageing).

Despite the changed situation at NZiRA, Professor Walker and many NZ colleagues continue to be hopeful that this visit will help to develop longer term collaborations between New Zealand, Australian, UK and other researchers in this field. As Professor Walker said, "Ageing is a global phenomenon and we need international research collaboration if we are to produce the best evidence for policy and practice aimed at successful adjustment to this historically unique development."

Prepared by Dr Sally Keeling, Senior Research Fellow, NZiRA/IPS

New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing is now closed and transferred to the Institute of Policy Studies. From Dec 2009, the website will transfer to www.ips.ac.nz

For links regarding Professor Alan Walker:

- New Dynamics of Ageing website: <http://www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk/>
- ERA-AGE website: <http://era-age.group.shef.ac.uk/>
- Growing Older Programme: <http://www.growingolder.group.shef.ac.uk/index.htm>
- European Forum website: <http://www.ageingresearch.group.shef.ac.uk/>
- Department of Sociological Studies website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/socstudies/>

News from Otago Branch

A group of Dunedin people attended the recent NZAG conference. Everyone was most appreciative of the conference committee's hard work and endorsed the joining of Age Concern with NZAG.

Of major interest was the work of the combination of researchers who, led by Debra Waters under the auspices of ACC and Age Concern Otago, presented their study of the peer-led exercise groups. Not only did this focus on the physical and personal perceptions of well-being, but also

picked up on the social impact of these groups, and the value of local leaders, who are volunteers.

We recently had a successful lunchtime meeting where Sally Keeling provided an update of research visions. Given the popularity of the combination of food and shared vision, we will wind up our activities this year with a meal and a place to share our research ideas and plans for the 2010 programme.

Experiencing the NZAG Age Concern NZ Conference 2009

Living in an Ageing Society: Shaping Tomorrow Today

Participating in the NZ Association of Gerontology - Age Concern NZ Conference in Wellington, 7th - 9th October, was a highlight of my 2009 year. One of the objects of the NZAG is **to promote and disseminate quality gerontological research**. The 2009 conference certainly achieved this aim. Every session I attended, from the opening powhiri to the closing ceremony, delivered on its promise of building understanding about "Living in an Ageing Society: Shaping Tomorrow Today." As organisational members, practitioners, community developers, volunteers, educators and researchers, we came together through our common interest in the fields of gerontology and geriatrics.

With 5 concurrent streams of papers to choose from, I was frequently torn between knowing which session to attend. Excellent chairing of each stream, and keeping the presenters to time, meant it was easy to move between rooms to take in a rich diversity of research topics. These ranged from understanding some of the political and social challenges of living in an ageing society, to hearing about some of the innovative solutions to complex community issues. Yet the quality research and innovative practice presentations were only part of the Conference 2009 story. I gained as much from the networking and interactions at the break times and the conference dinner. It

was a wonderful opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with researchers conducting nationally and internationally recognised studies.

While I found all the plenary sessions outstanding, I take this moment to reflect on the keynote address from Professor Alan Walker, of Sheffield University in the UK. His presentation "Active Ageing: Its Promise and Potential" was vibrant and compelling. So what is active ageing? Drawing on the World Health Organisation definition, active ageing is a process of optimising opportunities for participation in health and security to enhance quality of life as we age. It is more than being independent and being physically active. Active ageing is about experiencing quality of life in advanced age, participating in activities of choice and necessity in everyday life and the community, and experiencing emotional and physical security. The message came through loud and clear - what we individually and collectively do today is shaping tomorrow for our ageing New Zealand society. Let's do everything we can to get it right.

I wish to acknowledge and thank the New Zealand Association of Gerontology Auckland Branch Inc. for the grant covering my conference registration.

Dr Valerie Wright-St Clair



*Prof. Alan Walker,
Prof. Billie Giles-Corti and
Verna Schofield at the
conference closing ceremony*

Websites

In this regular column we sample some interesting websites related to ageing.

Passion for Health

Passion For Health is a new web site using video shorts and powerful interviews to capture inspiring insights from those who have found a way to maintain their Passion for Health.

www.passionforhealth.com.au

IAGG

The latest IAGG Newsletter is available on their website (click on Newsletter on the home page). It lists the three major Action Plans for the next four years, which are:

1. Promoting access to innovation and clinical research for frail elderly persons.
2. A health promotion programme on prevention of late onset dementia.
3. Identification of the main domains for quality of care and clinical research for nursing homes.

The Newsletter also introduces the new Executive Team for IAGG and highlights IAGG news and events worldwide.

www.iagg.com.br

News from Auckland Branch

The aim of NZAG Auckland Branch Inc is to focus on promoting research and understanding all factors that make up 'ageing'. This year we have provided five interesting and entertaining member forums.

1. In March we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the NZAG in Auckland. To mark this special occasion, Professor David Richmond and Doctors Jonathan Baskett and Graham Davison were awarded Life Memberships.
2. The now annual 'HOPE Foundation for Research on Ageing' Summer Students' research was presented in May. Emma McDonald's work on 'Predicting functional recovery following cardiac surgery' and Amanda Siu's 'Validation of two calculators of fracture risk in healthy NZ post-menopausal women' were interesting topics. NZAG Auckland Branch gifted the HOPE Foundation \$1000.
3. July's meeting was a 'smorgasbord' of postgraduate and training opportunities presented by educational representatives from the Universities of Auckland, AUT, Massey, Waikato and Victoria.
4. In September, John Rice from AUT offered an interesting presentation about the benefits of

the 'Never2Old' programme. Older people taking part in the programme also attended and shared their wide-ranging experiences in 'Never2Old'.

5. The final Branch meeting for 2009 was the AGM held in November. Dr Graham Davison provided a history of older peoples' care in an Auckland context, before offering up a challenge for the future.

Grants were awarded to three NZAG Auckland Branch members to support their attendance at the National NZAG and Age Concern NZ Conference 'Living in an Ageing Society: Shaping tomorrow today' held in Wellington 7-9th October.

NZAG Auckland Branch members were able to present their research at the 19th International Association of Gerontology & Geriatrics World Congress in Paris, 5 - 9th July. Thanks to the NZAG National Organisation for their support.

NZAG National Organisation has now been handed over by Wellington to Auckland for the next term of office. While Auckland based, the Organisation will be run separately from NZAG Auckland Branch Inc.

4th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality

Auckland University, August 30th - September 2nd 2009

Selwyn Centre for Ageing and Spirituality

"The conference was all I hoped it would be - it's good to network with people who are prepared to talk openly and honestly about ageing, dying and spirituality."

"Not only was this a wonderful conference, attended by wonderful and friendly people, but I met quite a few folks that I know I'll be staying in touch with professionally. Which is the best possible result for a trip like this".

This is the first time spirituality in older people has been the topic of a New Zealand conference. The variety of the participants' national, spiritual, cultural and occupational backgrounds made for interesting interchanges during and between presentations.

The conference themes were gender, culture and care and the issues ranged from women's experiences with ageing, such as Barbara Flood's "Re-Writing the Myth of Women and Ageing"- a much more positive experience than one is lead to believe- , to "Being Old and being Maori" by Valerie Wright-St Clair, and a Biblical perspective on ageing and old people from David Richmond.

Beatrice Hale presented a fascinating paper on liminality -"the intermediate stage in a rite of passage when an individual is stripped of key aspects of their former identity. It is at the time of transition that people become most aware of themselves and questions of spirituality". Dr. Michael Babarto, in a paper entitled "The Dying Game", looked at the tendency of Western medicine to prolong life rather than to allow timely and appropriate preparation for death. Dr. Toby Davidson illustrated aspects of ageing and spirituality through the mysticism of two Australian poets.

Keynote speaker Professor Jeff Levin (Duke University) spoke on spirituality, ageing and health from an epidemiologist's perspective. Some of the audience challenged the more religious American views of spirituality, leading to discussion of how New Zealanders might define spirituality. Professor John Swinton from the University of Aberdeen examined spirituality in dementia in a talk entitled "Positioning, holding, and loving: the spiritual heart of dementia care."

Rev Dr Elizabeth MacKinlay gave a spiritual perspective on dying. Rev Malcolm Goldsmith explored the experience of ageing and reflected on what may help to make this a time to celebrate.

Rev Charles Waldegrave presented results for the recent Enhancing Wellbeing in an Ageing Society (EWAS) study. For New Zealanders aged between 65 and 84, religion is very or somewhat important for about 77 %. Religious importance is significantly associated with well-being and life satisfaction. Charles pointed to the neglect of spirituality in MSD and MOH policy considerations.

There were two panels: one with people from Maori, Pacific, Indian and Chinese backgrounds; the other made up of older people who reflected on their experience of growing in age. Their contributions were greatly appreciated, with the audience enjoying the insights and humour.

These are just a few examples of the wide range of topics that relate to ageing and spirituality. See www.selwyncare.org.nz/scas to download conference papers.

One of the pleasantly surprising aspects of the conference was the discovery of so many New Zealanders involved in research touching on spirituality and ageing. Our hope is that we can have a core of researchers in this relatively neglected area to support and encourage each other. To that end, the Selwyn Centre for Ageing and Spirituality has established a forum for the exchange of ideas and information. See www.selwyncare.org.nz/scas

The conference was a first in New Zealand, but we hope it stimulated enough interest for ageing and spirituality to begin to appear on the agendas of policy-makers, academics, health care providers and religious organisations. As is the way with conferences, it was a great way to meet interesting people and eat good food!

"I just want to commend all of you on a well run, excellent content, conference. It is one of the best conferences I have ever attended and the food for lunch was wonderful."

*Dr. Chris Perkins, Director
Selwyn Centre for Ageing and Spirituality
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Conferences 2010

February 11-13 Monte Carlo, Monaco
1st International Congress on Alzheimer's Disease and Advanced Neurotechnologies
Web: www.meetingoftheminds2010.com

April 22-23 Auckland, NZ
New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services Conference
"Together we can" – focus on aged care
Email: Paul.Barber@nzccss.org.nz

May 3-6 Melbourne, Australia
International Federation on Ageing 10th Global Conference
Climate for Change: Ageing into the Future
Web: www.ifa2010.org

June 1-4 Hong Kong, China
12th International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons
Web: www.transed2010.hk/front/home2.html

June 25-26 Lyon, France
International Association of Sleep Research in Gerontology
Ageing and Sleep 2010
Web: www.aging-sleep.com

July 11-17 Gothenburg, Sweden
ISA World Congress of Sociology
Sociology on the Move
Web: www.isa-sociology.org/congress2010/rc/rc11.htm

Conferences 2011

October 23-27 Melbourne, Australia
North Asia/Oceania Regional Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics
Ageing well together: regional perspectives
Web: www.ageing2011.com

Editor's Desk

The next Newsletter will be circulated in April 2010.

Please send contributions for the next issue by 22nd March 2010, to:

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Visit: <http://gerontology.org.nz/about-nzag.html>

for:

- Auckland Branch
- Canterbury Branch
- Wellington Branch
- Waikato Branch
- Sub branches – Palmerston North, Otago, Tauranga

Membership

Any person interested in promoting the aims of the Association can be a member of the NZAG. This may include members of the public, health professionals, care staff, administrators, managers, representatives from organisations involved with the wellbeing of older people, and academics interested in gerontological research. If you are interested in becoming a member, contact: national@gerontology.org.nz

