

NZiRA NewZ

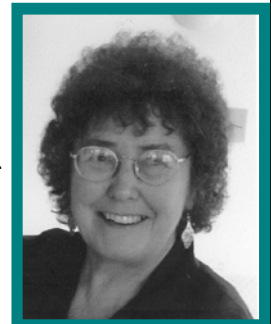
From the Director

An Excellent Conference and a Boost for NZiRA

Inside this issue:

From the Director	1
The TOWER Fellowship	2
Research News	3
Opportunities for students	3
Forthcoming events	4

The New Zealand Association of Gerontology, in association with the New Zealand Geriatrics Society, held its 2004 conference, "Expanding Horizons: The Art and Science of Ageing" in Christchurch earlier this month. Our 2004 NZiRA/TOWER fellow, Tom Kirkwood, was the lead keynote speaker at the conference. By way of TOWER's sponsorship, NZiRA also became a sponsor of the conference and this was an excellent outcome for all concerned. I was thrilled when participants approached me and said how much they enjoyed keeping in touch with the institute and the information which we are able to disseminate through newsletters, publications and email messages. NZiRA had a table at the conference and distributed a large number of publications. It is good to have feedback from our network members and to know that information is being used.



**NZiRA Director
Judith Davey**

I gave two papers at the conference—one on our transport research and one (in association with Justine Cornwall) derived from our paper on the impact of population ageing on the demand for health and disability support services, prepared for the Ministry of Health. In addition I chaired a plenary session at which Peggy Koopman Boyden, Ian Pool and Louise Dooley spoke, all people with whom I have had close and valued associations.

The conference was extremely well organised and the programme was rich and diverse—causing many a headache in deciding which stream to attend. It was an opportunity to make new contacts and renew existing ones and I am hopeful that NZiRA's visibility will encourage new activities and collaborations. We especially value our association with NZAG.

Justine Cornwall left NZiRA in March for a full-time position with the Ministry of Social Development. We wish her well, but she is greatly missed for her persistence in seeking out relevant material, her competence in compiling reports and her general cheerfulness and enthusiasm. Kirsty Fraser returned to her MA (Applied) studies and is also now employed by the Office for Senior Citizens. We miss her too. Recently, we have added Virginia De Joux and Rebecca Gray to our research team to help with the housing and transport research, respectively.

Things are very busy around the institute with several mid-year deadlines coming up. Watch this space for further developments!

—*Judith Davey*

The TOWER fellowship

Tom Kirkwood and his wife Louise arrived in Wellington on 22 March and had a very busy ten days, filled with presentations, meetings and social functions, ranging from meeting the Minister for Senior Citizens to spotting native birds at Waikanae Beach! Tom gave a presentation to the Ministry of Social Development/VUW School of Government Seminar Series, entitled *The Longevity Revolution – Implications for Policy*; a public lecture at Victoria University – *Ageing, Sex and Death*; a WEA series talk, *What makes us age*, at the Betty Campbell Centre and a Dean's Lecture at the Wellington Medical School - *Probing the boundary between "normal" ageing and disease*. He met with Ministry of Health officials, geriatricians, the Wellington branch of the NZ Association of Gerontology, and TOWER people.



*Tom Kirkwood,
2004 NZiRA/TOWER
visiting fellow*

In Auckland, Tom gave further presentations and met with academics, geriatricians and gerontologists, while Louise was able to contact previously-unmet relatives in the far north. They then set off for the far south, and, after a stay in Dunedin, they spent Easter exploring the Te Anau and Mount Cook areas before returning to Christchurch for the NZAG Conference. Tom was fully involved in the conference. Apart from giving the keynote address - *Rising to the Challenge of Age* - he was involved in a panel discussion—*Probing the Limits of Research on Ageing*— and a parallel session on the genetics of ageing and longevity.

Everyone who heard Tom was impressed with his ability to communicate complex scientific research and principles to general audiences and to place the findings of such research in an everyday context. He was also able to draw out relevant, and often pointed, policy implications. Several significant media interviews, with morning TV, with Kim Hill on her Saturday National Programme session and with feature writers from the main daily newspapers, gave Tom an even wider audience.

For those of you who would like to know more, or who may have missed Tom's presentations, I strongly recommend his books and the BBC Reith Lectures which he gave in 2001. His book titles include *Time of Our Lives: The Science of Human Ageing* and *Chance, Development and Ageing* (coauthored with leading US gerontologist Caleb Finch). The Reith Lectures were published in book form—*The End of Age*—or can be found on www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2001. See also www.ncl.ac.uk/medi/research/gerontology

Tom Kirkwood's Disposable Soma Theory of Ageing in a Nutshell

- We are not programmed to die.
- But our somatic cells only need to stay in good condition for as long as there is a reasonable chance to be still alive.
- We are programmed for survival but in our ancestral environment investments in reproduction were a higher priority than long-term survival.
- Ageing is caused by the build-up of faults in our cells caused by random molecular damage, genetic and environmental factors.

Research News

Contracts completed

Implications of an Ageing Population for the ACC: A Scoping Paper

lead researcher—Justine Cornwall

Evaluation Report—Age Concern New Zealand Elder Abuse and Neglect Training Resources

lead researcher—Lorraine Ritchie

Contracts in progress

Combining Work and Care.

This is the first study in New Zealand on the topic of working carers, funded by the Future of Work Fund, Department of Labour. Judith Davey and Sally Keeling are working on this project, which involves the workforces of Wellington and Christchurch City Councils. Postal questionnaires completed by 134 people who have eldercare responsibilities are being used in the analysis, along with information from 8 group interviews.

Coping without a Car

Over 70 interviews have been completed with people over 75 who have lost access to private transport. The respondents were recruited from all over the country by Volunteer Community Coordinators, linked to the Office for Senior Citizens, who commissioned the research. Judith Davey, Sue Missen and Marg Connor were the interviewers, sometimes struggling through storms and floods to achieve their goals, but always rewarded by the warmth and openness of the participants.

Accommodation Options for Older People

NZiRA is working in collaboration with BERL, for the Centre for Housing Research, Aotearoa/New Zealand. The scoping stage has been completed and we are carrying out the consultation phase, which involves agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors as well as work with the Maori and Pacific Island communities. The project also incorporates case studies of innovative developments and cost-benefit analysis of current and potential models.



Two Opportunities for Students Working in the Area of Ageing

Studentship Grant and Canadian Travel Award, 2004

NZAG National Executive invites applicants for one studentship award in 2004, valued at \$3000 NZ, to facilitate travel to Canada, and a study visit of up to one month, hosted jointly by the University of Alberta, Research Ageing, Policy and Practice Unit (RAPP), and the student section of the Canadian Association of Gerontology, known as Student Connection-Connexion Etudiante (SC-CE). This award is made possible by a generous donation of NZ funds by Prof Norah Keating, following her visit to NZiRA as TOWER fellow in 2003. This fund is augmented by a grant from NZAG's Education Fund, as a contribution to further development of student participation in NZAG, in line with IAG initiatives in this direction.

The award will be administered by NZAG, with selection made jointly with RAPP and SC-CE. The student will participate in the graduate programme at RAPP as appropriate to their field of research, and in student section activities of CAG (possibly including participation in the CAG Annual Conference in Victoria, BC, 21-23 October, 2004), and may make one visit by arrangement to another Canadian research centre, relevant to the student's research field. Supplementary funding may be required for in-Canada costs.

Websites:

RAPP: <http://www.hecol.ualberta.ca/RAPP>

CAG and SC-CE: http://www.cagacg.ca/english/410_e.php

Studentship Grant and Australian Travel Award, 2004

NZAG National Executive invites applicants for one travel award in 2004, valued at \$500 NZ, to assist with attendance at the Melbourne Conference of the Australian Association of Gerontology (17-19 November 2004), including participation in the meeting of the AAG Student Forum. (Information of the AAG Conference is available at their website: <http://www.aag.asn.au/conf/>). This award is made from NZAG's Education Fund, to encourage student participation in NZAG, in line with IAG initiatives in this direction.

Eligibility (both awards):

Any graduate student, full or part-time in any discipline with relevance to gerontology may apply, although preference will be given to those close to Master's completion, or enrolled as a PhD student.

Applications (both awards)

Full applications must be received by the National Executive, by 5 pm on Friday **21 May 2004**, to NZAG, P.O.Box 21182, Edgware, Christchurch.

Enquiries to

Sally Keeling, NZAG President

Email sally.keeling@chmeds.ac.nz

Phone: 03 337 7932

Fax: 03 337 7975

Sally can also email application forms for the relevant award.

Forthcoming Events

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 20 and 21 May | Trusts and Estate Planning Law , Lexis Nexis Seminar, Auckland |
| 14-19 June | Residential Care NZ Inc. Conference , Bay of Islands |
| 18 June and 19 June | Nutritional Support for Older People , Workshops in Wellington and Christchurch (see attached flyer) |

More from Tom Kirkwood

The Longevity Revolution – Implications for Policy

Factors Influencing Longevity and Health Span

- Genes
- Nutrition
- Lifestyle
- Environment

The Importance of Environment

- Environment can have powerful enabling or disabling effects on older age.
- Unsupportive environments (poor transport housing, crime, etc) discourage active lifestyle and social participation.
- Inactivity and loneliness accelerate the declines in body and mind and increase vulnerability to depression.
- Attitudes are a key part of the environment.