



*NZiRA News No.32
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Families Young and Old: Research Luncheon, held in Wellington on August 2, 2007

The Research Trust of Victoria recently hosted an event, to showcase the research capacity and contribution of three VUW Research Centres all working in the area of Families Young and Old.



From Left to Right: Dr Sally Keeling, (Director, NZiRA), Dr Pat Mayhew (Director, Crime and Justice Research Centre), Hon. Peter Dunne (United Future) and Dr Jan Pryor (Director, Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families).

Invited guests came from a wide variety of research partners, government and voluntary sector organisations, and those who are potential funders and users of our research.

Key points: Jan Pryor asked Why focus on families?

- They are the crucible for wellbeing for the vast majority of individuals, including elders and children

- Although everyone knows *about* families, we don't know enough about what helps them to thrive.

Pat Mayhew noted that older people and retired people appear in the latest NZ Crime Survey as being at lower risk of becoming the victims of crime, yet there remains a public perception that older people in some areas experience a sense of insecurity and risk.

Sally Keeling was the final speaker, and ended the presentation with a call for a research movement towards planning for a "mature society", where members of families young and old have a voice in identifying areas of risk and opportunity in their lives.

DIRECTOR'S DIARY

July

Carers Strategy launched: Consultation open

Discussions with Nurse Maude Assn in Christchurch, on establishment of their Institute of Community Healthcare.

Awarded Blue Skies Grant: Families Commission – Grandparents in rural families – mapping the field.

August

Research Luncheon: Families Young and Old

Seminar from Len Cook

Meeting with Office for Senior Citizens regarding their Greats and Grands project for October.

Appointed to Advisory Group, Ministry of Social Development: Turning 65 Project.

September

Gave Plenary address at Conference of NZ Dietetics Association - Kiwi food habits in later life: revisiting "Ladies a Plate"

Spoke to staff training session at Workplace Support, Christchurch: "Human capital issues in an ageing workforce"

Followed up various media enquiries after NZiRA Press Release on Sue Kedgeley's Employment Relations (Flexible Working Hours) Amendment Bill and Second Reading in Parliament on 5 Sept.

Blue Skies Grant: Families Commission "Grandparents in rural families – mapping the field"

This project will involve research interviews being planned in partnership with South Island Area Schools in October. I am pleased to welcome Kathy Glasgow, who has been appointed as Research Fellow on a part-time basis until December to work on this study based at NZiRA, and Dr Carolyn Morris of the University of Canterbury, as Co-investigator.

Reviews

I have had great pleasure in seeing two plays recently, each addressing in powerful ways, aspects of the experiences of ageing. The first, "The Road to Mecca" by Athol Fugard was performed at The Globe Theatre in Dunedin in early September. This play is set in 1974, in the Great Karoo landscape of South Africa, and represents the way in which the central 70 year old character, Miss Helen, maintains her home and garden as a place of sparkling light and creative construction, in the face of the well-meaning pressure from her local Pastor, suggesting she should move into a home for older people. Her response is "Light just one little candle in here, let the light in from just one little star, and the dancing starts". The play is based around the life and work of Helen Martins, and her story, and images of her house, yard and its sculptures can be found at <http://www.owlhouse.co.za/index.html>

September has meant a SOLD OUT Season for Roger Hall's latest play at the Court Theatre, in Christchurch: "Who Wants to be 100?" is subtitled "Anyone Who's 99". This satire on contemporary aged care experiences goes beyond the facile, and somehow allows the four men living in the rest home and their visitors and carers to show their varying perspectives with warmth and empathy. While I heard some of the laughter in the audience around me as masking a nervous giggle or two, I left the theatre buoyed up by the experience of having seen personal and public later life questions being brought out into the spotlight.

To round this section off, as I was writing this piece, I listened to National Radio's Sunday programme, to an interview with Prof Elizabeth McKinlay, speaking about her research and personal experience in "Spirituality Growth and Care in the Fourth Age of Life". This is the title of one of her recent books - full information on her work and publications can be found at the website for the Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies, Canberra: <http://www.centreforageing.org.au/>

She made a visit to Auckland and Christchurch in September, and her talks on this important field were extremely well received in both cities. Her message is based on a strong blend of health practice and theology, and focusses on the need to communicate with people about wellbeing: she stresses that ageing is not "a disease", but is part of a life journey. People experiencing possibly much the same (diagnosed) disease process can have very different outcomes, indicating that "something more" is going on. Her definitions of this "something more" are based on four fields: meaningful relationships, the quality of the environment, active or passive engagement with the expressive and creative arts, and personal religious beliefs.

REGISTRATIONS OPEN

NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF GERONTOLOGY CONFERENCE

University of Waikato, Hamilton November 14-16, 2007

www.gerontology.org.nz

RESEARCH POSITIONS: AGEING IN NZ

PhD stipend available in HRC-funded study on Resilient Aging and Place: Social and Community Health, School of Population Health, FMHS, University of Auckland.

We are conducting an HRC-funded study on Resilient Aging in Place, using participant-oriented qualitative research strategies to explore the perspectives of diverse older people on 'what is an ideal place in which to grow old'. We are looking for an excellent PhD student to participate in the research project. This student will be expected and supported to develop a research question closely related to the project. The PhD student will also participate in the research development, playing an active role on the Project Advisory Committee, and in the collection of data through interviews, focus groups, and photo-elicitation. The student will be involved in the interpretation and coding of data, and will be encouraged to present findings at national and international workshops, and to be involved in the dissemination of data through peer-reviewed literature. The stipend is for \$25,000 per year for three years. Ideally we are looking for a student who has experience and/or training in conducting qualitative research and analysis. The position is open to all, please note that students who identify as Māori, students who identify with Pacific nations including New Zealand-born, and/or students who identify as 'mature' students are particularly encouraged to apply. Interested students please send CV to Dr. Janine Wiles, j.wiles@auckland.ac.nz, phone 09 3737599 ext 86553, if possible by late Sept.

EMERGING ISSUES PROJECT– SHORT TERM RESEARCH ASSISTANCE 2007

NZiRA is seeking a senior or graduate student to assist with preparation of research and policy papers for publication, during November-December 2007: ENQUIRIES TO sally.keeling@vuw.ac.nz

Press clippings file:

I am often sent cuttings or web-links to interesting items in the print media. My pick of recent articles is one from the New Yorker, April 30, 2007: "The way we age now", by Atul Gawande. After a very readable outline for lay readers of the contemporary debates on why and how we age, in biological terms, he goes on to say

"... there are costs to averting our eyes from the realities. For one thing, we put off changes that we need to make as a society. For another, we deprive ourselves of opportunities to change the individual experiences of ageing for the better."

Vital role played by older workers, Graham Stairmand, national president, Grey Power
Wednesday September 12, 2007 By Steve Hart NZ Herald

Better healthcare and a change in people's attitude to retirement means older workers will increasingly be relied upon to keep the country going. In fact, Department of Labour figures show that by 2020 the number of people available for work will start to drop. A change in people's attitude to retirement means older workers will increasingly be relied upon to keep the country going. In fact, Department of Labour figures show that by 2020 the number of people available for work will start to drop, due to falling birth rates.

While this trend may leave the door wide open for older people who want to continue working beyond the typical retirement age of 65 - employers will have to be a little more open-minded when it comes to recruitment.

"It's getting easier," says Graham Stairmand, national president of Grey Power, a lobby group promoting the welfare and well-being of the over-50s. "But employers will have to be more flexible when it comes to employing older people. Older people often only want to work part time, perhaps starting work later in the day. But what they may lack in physical fitness, they make up for in experience, knowledge of their company and industry and can be a strong guiding hand to new people to the industry."

Sally Keeling will be working away from her NZiRA desk during October, initially doing Research Fieldwork in the South Island, and from 18 October, attending the Asia-Oceania Regional Congress of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics, in Beijing. She will be back at NZiRA on Wednesday 7 November.

Any enquiries on NZiRA business can initially be referred to Barbara Gillespie: 04 463 5710

Continuing education in the study of ageing: University of Otago

Gerontology is known as "the study of ageing in all its aspects", and it is offered as an "endorsement" within the Health Sciences programmes offered through the University of Otago at Christchurch. The fields of study covered in the two core Gerontology courses are designed to equip health professionals from any discipline to prepare themselves for the challenges ahead in New Zealand as an "ageing society".



This photo shows a current Gerontology postgraduate student, Lizzy Baker, with one of her clients in Christchurch. As an occupational therapist, Lizzy's work entails discussing home modifications around the house, so that they can continue to enjoy their house and garden.

While the study focus is interdisciplinary, the two compulsory papers cover respectively Social Care and Health Care, under the course codes HASX 409 and HASX 404. Each course is run over a semester, involving 16 weeks of study. Most of the postgraduate students are working while they are studying, and they often find they can design their project-based work around current issues which face them in their workplace.

The two Gerontology papers are both taught in Block mode, with two or three Blocks in each semester. This means that students from outside Christchurch are able to join the teaching sessions and benefit from the interdisciplinary perspectives and experiences from a variety of service settings brought by other students. The courses are convened by Dr Sally Keeling, a social scientist, and Prof Tim Wilkinson, a consultant geriatrician, with an extensive group of guest teachers involved in each course. For those students who wish to develop their academic plans beyond the Postgraduate Certificate level, the Postgraduate Diploma allows the inclusion of two additional papers, from the wider Health Science offerings. These optional papers could include subjects such as Health Promotion, Health Economics, Health Systems Organisation and Management. Those who progress to Masters programmes must include a Research Methods paper in their Diploma to prepare for the thesis, which is a one year full-time equivalent research project, conducted under supervision. Nurses interested in interdisciplinary approaches to aged care, and particularly those who work in community settings are welcome to consider these courses, alongside those offered by the Postgraduate Centre for Nursing Studies, which is also part of the University of Otago at Christchurch.

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