The General Assembly of the United Nations approved in October 1982 the General Plan of Action as decided by the UN World Assembly on Aging (Vienna, July 26 – August 3rd, 1982). This Plan of Action stresses the need for a research-based care for the aged and therefore for increased efforts to promote research within different sections.

Recommendation 1 shows how much gerontological knowledge influenced the formulation of this Plan of Action:

The care of elderly persons should go beyond disease orientation and should involve their total well-being taking into account the interdependence of the physical, mental, social, spiritual and environmental factors. Health care should therefore involve the health and social sectors and the family in improving the quality of life of older persons. Health efforts, in particular primary health care as a strategy, should be directed at enabling the elderly to lead independent lives in their own family and community for as long as possible instead of being excluded and cut off from all activities of society."

The need for better epidemiological studies is stressed in recommendation 12:

"International exchange and research cooperation should be promoted in carrying out epidemiological studies on local patterns of health and diseases and their consequences together with investigating the validity of different care delivery systems including self-care, and home-care by nurses, and in particular of ways of achieving optimum programme effectiveness; also investigating the demands for various types of care and developing means of coping with them paying particular attention to comparative cost-effectiveness; and gathering data on the physical, mental and social profiles of aging individuals in various social and cultural contexts including attention to the special problems of access to services in rural and remote areas in order to provide a sound basis for future action."

The aims of IAG regarding promotion of research and training in gerontology are met especially in recommendations 42-48 which were supported not only by the representatives of the developed but also and especially by those of developing countries:

Recommendation 42
Governments and institutions concerned should establish or improve existing information exchange facilities such as data banks in the field of aging.

Training and Education
70. The dramatic increase in the number and proportion of older adults calls for a significant increase in training. A dual approach is needed: an international programme for training concomitant with national and regional training programmes that are particularly
relevant to conditions in the countries and regions concerned. The needs of the elderly, as well as the implications of the aging of the population on development, need to be taken into account in developing education and training policies and programmes, also for the younger generation.

Recommendation 43
Education and training programmes should be interdisciplinary in nature, as aging and the aging of the population is a multidisciplinary issue. Education and training in the various aspects of aging and the aging of the population should not be restricted to high levels of specialization, but should be made available at all levels. Efforts should be made to regulate the training skills and educational requirements for different functions in the field of aging.

71. The exchange of skills, knowledge and experience among countries with similar or comparable structures and composition, or having historical, cultural, linguistic or other links, with respect to their aging population would be a particularly fertile area of international cooperation. Besides the transfer of specific skills and technologies, the exchange of experience regarding the wide array of practices relating to aging could also constitute an area for technical cooperation among developing countries. In regions which include both developed and developing countries side by side the rich opportunities for mutual learning and cooperation in training and research should be vigorously explored.

Recommendation 44
Intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations should take the necessary measures to develop trained personnel in the field of aging, and should strengthen their efforts to disseminate information on aging, and particularly to the aging themselves.

Recommendation 44 bis
Retirees’ and elderly people’s organizations should be involved in planning and carrying out such exchanges of information.

Recommendation 44 bis bis
The implementation of several recommendations will require trained personnel in the field of aging. Practical Training Centers should be promoted and encouraged, where appropriate facilities already exist, to train such personnel, especially from developing countries, who would in their turn train others. These centres would also provide updating and refresher courses and act as a practical bridge between and among developed and developing regions: they would be linked with appropriate United Nations agencies and facilities.

Recommendation 45
At national, regional and international levels, extra attention should be given to research and study undertaken in support of integrating the problems of aging in planning and policy formulation and management.

Recommendation 46
Training in all aspects of gerontology and geriatrics should be encouraged and given due prominence at all levels in all educational programmes. Governments and competent authorities are called upon to encourage new or existing institutions to pay special attention to appropriate training in gerontology and geriatrics.

Recommendation 47
The Plan of Action gives high priority to research related to developmental and humanitarian aspects of aging. Research activities are instrumental in formulating, evaluating and implementing policies and programmes: (a) as to the implications of the aging of the population on development and (b) as to the needs of the aging. Research on the social, economic and health
aspects of aging should be encouraged to achieve efficient uses of resources, improvement in social and health measures, including the prevention of functional decline, age-related disabilities, illness and poverty, and coordination of the services involved in the care of the aging.

The knowledge obtained by research provides scientific backing for a sounder basis for effective societal planning as well as for improving the well-being of the elderly. Further research is required, e.g. (a) to narrow the wide gaps in knowledge on aging and on the particular needs of the aging, and (b) to enable resources provided for the aging to be used more effectively. There should be emphasis on the continuum of research from the discovery of new knowledge to its vigorous and more rapid application and transfer of technological knowledge with due consideration of cultural and social diversity.

International Association of Gerontology

Recommendation 47
Research should be conducted into the developmental and humanitarian aspects of aging on local, national, regional and global levels. Research should be encouraged particularly in the biological, mental and social fields. Issues of basic and applied research of universal interest to all societies include: (a) the role of genetic and environmental factors; (b) the impact of biological, medical, cultural, societal and behavioural factors on aging; (c) the influence of economic and demographic factors (including migration) on societal planning; (d) the use of skills, expertise, knowledge and cultural potential of the aging; (e) the postponement of negative functional consequences of aging; (f) health and social services for the aging as well as studies of coordinated programmes; (g) training and education.

Such research should be generally planned and carried out by researchers closely acquainted with national and regional conditions, being granted the independence necessary for innovation and diffusion.

States, intergovernmental organizations should encourage the establishment of institutions specializing in the teaching of gerontology, geriatrics and geriatric psychology in countries where such institutes do not exist.

Recommendation 48
International exchange and research cooperation as well as data collection should be promoted in all fields having a bearing on aging, in order to provide a rational basis for future social policies and action. Special emphasis should be placed on comparative and cross-cultural studies on aging. Interdisciplinary approaches should be stressed.

For the implementation of this General Plan of Action governments as well as nongovernmental organizations are requested to contribute. The national societies of gerontology should bring this plan to the attention of universities and governments. The Executive Committee of IAG signed a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ with the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, Vienna, regarding the establishment of an International Network on Aging.

Sandoz Prize for Gerontological Research
The Jury received almost 80 applications or suggestions for the prize, which will be presented to the winner(s) at the joint meetings of the European Clinical Section and the European Section on Basic Research in Gerontology (Budapest, September 1-3, 1983).

Changes in National Societies
The Association of Gerontology (India) elected at its congress in October 1982 the following council members:

President
Prof. M.S. Kanungo
(Varanasi) Biology

Vice-President
Prof. M. Hasan (Aligarh)
Medical Sciences
Vice-President
Prof. A. Venkoba Rao
(Madurai)
Sociopsychological Sciences
Secretary
Dr. S.N. Singh (Varanasi)
Jt. Secretary
Dr. (Mrs.) C. Dave
(Bombay)
Asst. Secretary
Dr. (Miss) Behorse
S. Gandhi (Varanasi)
Treasurer
Dr. M.K. Thakur
(Varanasi)
Editor
Dr. Manjula (Varanasi)
Council
Prof. P.V. Ramamurti members
(Tirupati) Social Sciences

Dr. R.M. Bhat (Bombay)
Medical Sciences

Dr. S.P. Sharma
The Mexican Society of Geriatrics and Gerontology elected the following new council:
President: Dr. Sergio Monarrez
Vice-President: Dr. Joaquin González
Secretary: Dr. Héctor Munguía
Treasurer: Dr. Esther C. de Lehr

Personalia
Prof. E.W. Busse received the 1982 Brookdale Award at the meeting of the Gerontological Society of America 1982.
Prof. M. Beugener was elected as President of the International Association of Psychogeriatrics.