50th Anniversary Meeting of the IAG

To mark the 50th Anniversary of the International Association of Gerontology, I, as IAG President, convened a series of meetings that were held in Salsomaggiore, Italy during December 2000. The meeting was held with the generous support of the Salsomaggiore Terme who provided a substantial block of accommodation and Novartis Foundation for Gerontology that gave supplementary funding towards travel costs for attendees.

The Executive, Regional Chairs and Presidents of 55 Member associations met and considered future strategic directions for the Association. The discussion ranged over such topics as formulation of the vision, values and mission of the Association; the schedule of global and regional meetings; membership criteria; input into the Second World Assembly on Ageing; improved global communication and networking between member associations; fostering of research and education on ageing globally; and the legal standing of the IAG. The discussion reflected the very substantial progress made in gerontology over the 50-year life of the Association and the need to respond to the considerable challenges posed by the much greater visibility of ageing as a political, scientific and educational issue throughout the world today.

Regional Groups met during the event and a special consultation took place between the IAG Executive and a number of other international umbrella NGOs to discuss a coordinated NGO input to the Second UN World Assembly on Ageing to be held in Spain in April 2002. Proposals were put forward for the IAG to pursue the special issues associated with a perspective of the global ageing research, education and practitioner constituency and in addition to have a coordinated input from all of the relevant international NGOs.

A special IAG Presidential Award was made to Mr Charles Studer, who has worked energetically in support of the activities of the IAG over many years.

Finally, the third in a series of expert meetings on a United Nations' project developing a Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century (RAA-21) was held. This project has been supported by the Novartis Foundation for Gerontology and convened by the IAG on behalf of the United Nations programme on ageing. (See the Executive Summary of the most recent document below). The interactions of the Agenda with a number of events and processes leading to the 2nd World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, Spain in April 2002 will provide vehicles for further elaboration and integration of the Agenda into the mainstream of global action on ageing.

From these events and with the culmination of the 2nd World Assembly on Ageing, the Agenda will emerge as a well-defined element incorporated into the new global plan of action on ageing envisioned as a major output of the World Assembly. The Research Agenda on Ageing will continue to be developed, reviewed and revised in the future. In the end it must be a 'process' not simply a 'product'. The evidence base that is necessary to effectively inform good policy, programme implementation and provision will grow and with greater knowledge will continue to evolve with cumulative human experience and shared insights into this most fundamental aspect of human life and its protean consequences for all of humanity.
The Salsomaggiore events laid the foundations for exciting future developments for the IAG and many positive recommendations for action (see page below) will be taken forward to the Council Meetings to be held in July, 2001 in Vancouver.

Gary Andrews  
President, IAG

Outcomes of Anniversary Meeting

The following formulation will be submitted to the IAG Council Meeting to be held in conjunction with the World Congress in July 2001. This formulation follows the review by Prof. Gary Andrews of the IAG's vision, values and mission as expressed in the Association’s By-Laws, various actions and activities over the years, the ‘Adelaide Declaration on Ageing’ and taking into account the discussions of these matters, recorded by the Secretary General, Mary Luszcz, that took place at the 50th Anniversary meeting of IAG Executive and Presidents of Member Associations.

It is recommended that the IAG adopt the following statements expressing the Vision, Values and Mission of the Association:

**Vision**

The ultimate vision towards which the International Association of Gerontology aspires is of a world in which individual and population ageing is substantially understood in scientific terms and its consequences are fully appreciated at all levels of public and private organisation. In pursuit of this ideal the IAG will endeavour to foster the well-being of all, as ageing is experienced in all its diversity throughout the lifespan at individual and societal level. In addition, the vision is for the continued pursuit of further scientific knowledge on ageing with full vigour and foresight and for the fruits of these endeavours to be widely disseminated, making them known to all.

**Values**

The values governing the endeavours of the International Association of Gerontology include:

- Recognition of the importance of increasing longevity and the ageing of populations as critical challenges to society in both developed and developing countries.
- Acknowledgements of the fundamental contribution that can be made by scientific research in improving understanding and development of appropriate individual and societal responses to ageing.
- Commitment to sound education and training of all of those involved in provision of care and services to older persons as an important means of ensuring quality of care and support to older persons.
- Belief in the need for wider education of the whole of society to promote understanding of the:
  - implications of ageing populations, and
  - the positive outcomes and benefits of longer life for individuals and societies.
- Support for the concept of the family as a central issue in the quality of life and well-being of older persons in both developed and developing societies.
- Commitment to promotion of the highest quality and standards for services provided for older persons.
- Recognition of the inherent diversity in the ageing process and among older persons, including socio-economic, educational and cultural variations.
- Respect for the rights and dignity of older persons in all circumstances.

**Mission**

The mission of the International Association of Gerontology is to promote the highest levels of achievement of gerontological research and training worldwide and to interact with other international, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations in the promotion of gerontological interests globally and on behalf of its member associations. The Association pursues these activities with a view to promoting the highest quality of life and well-being of all people as they experience ageing at individual and societal levels.

**Strategic Directions for Council Consideration**

Extensive discussion of various aspects of the strategic directions for the Association canvassed at the 50th Anniversary meeting resulted in the following reformulation to be submitted to the Council Meeting in July.

**Wider Membership of IAG**

A proposal will be submitted to the Council Meeting that membership is opened to National Associations (Societies) concerned with Geriatric Medicine.
It is proposed that applications be accepted from Associations at national level that are formed for the purposes of furthering the science, education and practice of geriatric medicine. To be eligible such associations (or societies) must be duly constituted and registered as a professional association and be recognised as the principle body so constituted at national level. Only one such body should be accepted for each country.

The By-Laws relating to the processes of application, fees and representation on IAG and Regional Council would apply as they do generally at present or as they may be amended at some time in the future.

It will further be proposed at the next IAG Council Meeting that a task force be established to:

1. Identify what are the pros and cons of going to a more open form of membership allowing the admission under certain conditions of other groups concerned with research, education and practice related to ageing organised at national level.
2. Propose appropriate amendments to the By-Laws and Manual of Operating Procedures for processing of applications, criteria for membership and representation on IAG and Regional Councils.

**Improved Interactivity and Communication within IAG**

It will be proposed at the July IAG Council Meeting in Vancouver that the incoming IAG executive give consideration to ways in which the IAG can be more interactive with membership in the interim between major Congress activities. This will include examining options for web site developments to be pursued independently or with support for a sponsoring body.

**Review of IAG Calendar of Meetings and Events**

It was generally agreed that the pattern of the Congresses should not change, but nonetheless it is desirable to look at ways of ensuring that there is an appropriate level of interaction on the international level. Ways in which council meetings (in vivo or via electronic means) could be held more frequently should be explored.

**Interaction with Second World Assembly on Ageing**

The IAG is now recognised by the United Nations Secretariat for the Second World Assembly and the Spanish host organisation as responsible for auspicing an associated event to the Assembly – the Valencia Forum. This Congress is directed at ensuring an input to the considerations of the Assembly from the global community of researchers, educators, and providers (including practitioners) ensuring that the Assembly is informed by the best available research and information (see official web site for the Assembly: http://www.madrid2002-enejecimiento.org/).

A progress report on preparations for this event will be sent to all member associations of IAG prior to the Vancouver Congress.

**Review of IAG Legal Status and By-Laws**

Action will now be taken to progress the formal amendment of IAG By-Laws in accordance with the legal requirements in Belgium (the country of official incorporation and registration of IAG).

**Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century**

What follows is the Executive Summary of the Report of a Series of Expert Consultations held by the International Association of Gerontology on behalf of the United Nations Programme on Ageing with the support of the Novartis Foundation for Gerontology.

- The UN Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century represents a major initiative in the area of ageing and development, intended to contribute to the elaboration of public policies on ageing and influence the direction and priorities for scientific gerontology in the decades to come.
- The conviction that a sound research agenda on ageing is needed has emerged from the awareness that population and individual ageing will be a major challenge to humankind in the new millennium. Though, at present, most societies and individuals appear to be poorly equipped to meet this challenge.
- The intention is to develop a systematic approach to formulating and implementing a global agenda on policy-related research on ageing.
- The project had its genesis in 1997 at the 16th Congress of the International Association of Gerontology in Adelaide, Australia with an agreement between the United Nations Programme on Ageing and the International Association of Gerontology to develop a Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century.
- Two expert group meetings in February and December 1999 defined the overall programme for a research agenda on ageing. The meetings acknowledged that research on ageing could be undertaken at several levels and across many arenas and proposed a broad framework to encompass major research issues.
During the meetings, a number of recurring themes on ageing emerged as a series of priorities for further research and development. Each of these was seen as being able to be examined within the broad framework for the Research Agenda adopted by the meetings. The areas for consideration were summarised into three general categories as follows:

- Quality of life, processes of ageing and ‘healthy ageing’.
- Productivity and integration.
- Material security over the life course and networks of formal and informal systems of care and support.

The final expert consultation in Salsomaggiore, Italy in December 2001 tackled the task of refining the research topics that had previously been identified and clarifying priorities for action as well as proposing the next steps aimed at implementing the agenda in practice.

The expert consultations progressively defined the most critical research arenas and identified the following topics for research:

- Healthy ageing.
- Biomedical.
- Physical and mental functioning.
- Social participation and integration.
- Changing structures of families, kin, primary groups and community.
- Economic security.
- Macro-societal change and development.
- Policy processes and evaluation.

A number of methodological challenges at present undoubtedly pose significant limitations to effective implementation of any comprehensive global research agenda. While fundamental work (instrumentation) has been progressively undertaken in many settings methodological refinements are still urgently required that cut across many of the research areas outlined above.

A limited number of ‘overarching’ recommendations for research priorities have been identified throughout the process of consultation on the Agenda.

- Research into current practices and options for maintaining material security into older age.
- Research into changing family structures, intergenerational transfer systems and emergent patterns of family and institutional dynamics.
- Research into the determinants of healthy ageing.
- Research into basic biological mechanisms and age-associated disease.
- Research into quality of life and ageing in diverse cultural, socio-economic and environmental situations.
- Research into the relationships of population ageing and socio-economic development.

As the United Nations prepares for the Second World Assembly on Ageing and the revision of the international plan of action on ageing, the opportunity is presented for there to be a more comprehensive, collaborative and coordinated approach to addressing the challenges of improving knowledge and understanding of individual and population ageing world-wide. A mechanism can now be contemplated that provides for a global commitment to research in the key priority areas identified in this agenda and to the implementation of a plan of action for this research at all levels: global, regional, national and local.

Parting Note and Gratitude

This is my final column as Editor for the IAG. It has been a pleasure to have been associated with Gerontology in this capacity. The IAG is grateful to the continuing support provided by all those at Karger who share our values and mission, and, importantly, enable us to achieve them.

Mary Luszcz
Secretary General,
International Association of Gerontology