



New Zealand

Association of Gerontology

Te Ropu Maturanga Kaumatatanga o Aotearoa

April 2007

Whatever Happened to the Cunningham Report?

Reports prepared for Government are often like pawns in a game of monopoly. Depending on the fall of the die, they can attract riches, be put on hold, or proceed directly to jail. Uncertainty surrounds which of these fates has befallen the Cunningham report, Population Ageing Research in New Zealand: An Independent View.

This potentially influential report provides an overview of the present status of research on ageing in this country and recommends pathways for future development. Although dated December 2005, the final report was not released until nearly a year after its completion date. As yet, the contents have received little or no public acknowledgement. At the time of writing this editorial, the report is still not freely available on website. Action on its recommendations for change is now way overdue.

The story started over two years ago when the Ministry of Social Development convened a workshop for researchers from around New Zealand. The aim was to discuss future priorities for research in ageing and strategies for increasing research capacity. Four months later, the Ministry of Social Development appointed Chris Cunningham, Professor of Maori Health at Massey University, to carry out a formal review of the area. In addition to support from the Minister of Social Development and Employment, approval for the report came from four other Ministers of the Crown.

The purpose of the review was to address issues related to:

- coordination among researchers in the field;
- building capacity in the age-related research sector;
- immediate research needs for policy makers and researchers;
- current and future data needs.

In compiling his report, Professor Cunningham consulted with a range of people and organisations in the field, including members of the New Zealand Association of Gerontology. We were pleased to be part of this process and

eagerly awaited the outcome of the consultation process. Alas, when the report finally came to hand, it was too late for informed discussion at the Ageing in New Zealand conference held in November last year.

Recommendations from the report are presented in a coherent framework that includes immediate, intermediate and long-term actions relating to each of the issues addressed. A key factor identified is the need for increased coordination among those working in the area. The report states a preference for a single agency or organisation to take responsibility for this role.

There is much to commend the Cunningham report. This is the first report of its kind on the current state-of-play of research on ageing in New Zealand. Furthermore, the document delivers a clear national strategic direction for the future. Many aspects of the report could be implemented with a relatively modest allocation of resources. Implementation of the proposals would offer invaluable opportunities for Government, academic and not-for-profit agencies to work together in promoting research on ageing in this country.

As an organisation, the New Zealand Association of Gerontology is concerned about the fate of the Cunningham report. We believe that the recommendations should be widely disseminated for debate within the public arena. A course of action is also needed to start introducing short term proposals and planning for longer-term perspectives. The impetus for a planned approach to research on ageing, which has been gathering momentum over the past two years, must continue to be nurtured and developed.

Verna Schofield

President, New Zealand Association of Gerontology

Poor Health in Baby Boomers.....	2
Opinions on Long-term Care	2
Retirement Villages Survey	2
Home and Away	3
Wanted for a Research Project	3
Web Sight.....	3
Professor Stuart Parker...4	
Calendar of Events	4

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.

Poor Health in Baby Boomers?

In the past two decades, there has been a dramatic decline in disability among people 65 and older. Researchers and policymakers are vitally interested in whether this trend will continue, accelerate or decelerate with the retirement of the baby boomers. This is a critically important question for planning the health, housing and other needs of older people.

Americans in their early to mid-50s today actually report poorer health, more pain and more trouble doing everyday physical tasks than their older peers reported at the same age in years past, a recent analysis has shown.

The study was conducted by Beth J. Soldo, of the University of Pennsylvania, and colleagues. They compared the overall, self-reported health of people in three birth-year groups - those born in 1936-41 (now ages 66 to 71), 1942-47 (now ages 60 to 65) and 1948-53 (now ages 54 to 59). The data came from the nationwide Health and Retirement Study (HRS) of more than 20,000 Americans over age 50 that began in 1992. It draws from survey respondents' answers to questions about their health and well-being when they were all between the ages of 51 and 56. The study showed:

- The two younger groups were less likely than the oldest group to have said their health was "excellent or very good" at 51 to 56 years of age.
- The youngest group reported having more pain, chronic health conditions, and drinking and psychiatric problems than people who were the same age 12 years earlier.
- Compared with the oldest group, the youngest group was more likely to have reported difficulty in walking, climbing steps, getting up from a chair, kneeling or crouching, and doing other normal daily physical tasks.

This new analysis provides some initial data raising the question of whether today's pre-retirees could reach retirement age in worse shape than their predecessors, with individuals potentially in poorer health than current retirees and possibly increasing health care costs for society. The research (Soldo, B.J. et al. Cross-Cohort Differences in Health on the Verge of Retirement. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 1276) is available online at: www.nber.org

Opinions on long-term care

Mark Booth is a New Zealand Harkness Fellow working at Brown University for a year, away from his usual job as a policy manager at the Ministry of Health in Wellington. He is looking for expert opinions on long-term care.

The Commonwealth Fund of New York commissions annual surveys of experts in health care to produce comparative international studies, and these are available on their web site at: www.cmwf.org/surveys/surveys.html

This year the survey is of US experts in long term care of older people, and will look at areas such as funding, quality and information technology.

As part of his research, Mark is replicating relevant parts of the survey in New Zealand to look at how opinions and views of experts on long term care for older people compare in the two countries. It would be good to include people from the NZ Association of Gerontology in the survey.

If you would be willing to take part, please email Mark_Booth@brown.edu. The e-mail addresses will only be used to send out the survey - they will not be passed on to any other organisations or individuals.

Retirement Villages Survey

The Retirement Commission's benchmark survey of retirement village residents and operators, released in December 2006, provides useful information about villages and levels of residents' satisfaction in New Zealand.

The survey, undertaken as part of the Retirement Commission's monitoring role, provides a stock take of villages before the Retirement Villages Act 2003 began to come into force. It's the most comprehensive survey of its type undertaken in New Zealand.

Face-to-face interviews with 173 retirement village residents and 52 retirement village operators were carried out by research firm ACNielsen during August and September last year.

The results found that 99% of residents, in villages where the operator agreed to participate in the survey, have high levels of satisfaction.

The areas found to be most in need of attention are:

- Residents' actual understanding of what they have purchased in entering a village.
- Operators' awareness of their obligations under the Retirement Villages Act.
- Consulting and involving residents.
- Complaints handling.
- The statutory supervisor village 'watchdog' role.

The main reasons for people deciding to enter a village were security, their or their spouse's health and/or mobility, and their house/garden being too much to manage. Other reasons included having access to care and support when it's needed, wanting fewer worries and their family wanting them to enter a retirement village.

The survey also found that, for residents:

- The median age on entry is 78 years.
- The median age is 83 years, with 12% over 90 years of age.
- 70% are women and 70% live alone.
- 99% are New Zealand or other European.
- 58% say their health is good or better.
- 68% have one or more disabilities.
- 61% have only NZ Superannuation or not much more to live on.

The median current cost of a residential unit was \$200,000 and the median monthly fee for independent units was \$300 per week. More than half (57%) of villages did not share any capital gain with departing residents, with one third sharing some (most commonly around half of the capital gain). Almost all charge capital deductions on departure, with some charging selling and other costs.

Residents prefer to get information about their rights from village management (63%), followed by their lawyer (36%), the village residents' committee (26%) and their family (22%). Almost none prefer to get information from community agencies. Two thirds prefer printed information such as brochures (65%), followed by face to face (41%) and group meetings and seminars (22%).

The full report and Executive Highlights are available from the Sector news page of the Retirement Villages section of the Retirement Commission's website www.retirement.org.nz. The Commission will do a follow-up survey when the Retirement Villages Act is fully implemented in 2008.

The main provisions of the Act come into force from 1 May 2007. Information on the Act and residents' rights is available on the website above. Information for people thinking about moving into a retirement village, including search tips, calculations and checklists, is on the Retirement Villages section in 60plus of www.sorted.org.nz. Printed copies of this information is available at no cost by calling the Retirement Commission on 0800 438 767.

Wendy Proffitt

Retirement Villages Adviser, Retirement Commission

Home and Away

This is the title of a talk I gave to the March 2007 meeting of the Canterbury Branch of NZAG. In this talk, I was sharing some of the lessons I had learnt during 2006, when I was on Research and Study Leave from the University of Otago. I spent four months of my leave in the UK, visiting research centres on ageing at the Universities of Oxford, Sheffield, Surrey and Swansea, as well as attending meetings and conferences in South Africa, Finland, Wales and Sweden.



NZAG Wellington Branch committee dinner held to farewell Judith Davey (front row right) from her role as Director of NZiRA

The title also well illustrates the pattern for my working life from January 2007. I now hold two "day jobs", working alternate weeks as a Senior Lecturer at the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences (University of Otago), and as Director of the New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing (NZiRA), Victoria University of Wellington.

Judith Davey, former NZiRA Director, has done a great deal to promote and contribute to research and development in ageing in New Zealand. In particular, she has contributed to important work on housing, equity release, transport, ageing in place, population ageing, health and service challenges, and studies of an ageing workforce. Judith also hosted a major Visiting Fellowship series, which was sponsored by TOWER from 2001-2005, and by Southern Cross in 2006.

For a full record of the series, and to follow other NZiRA activities, please add the website to your favourites: www.vuw.ac.nz/nzira

Looking ahead, it is expected that the 2007 NZiRA programme will include the biennial Postgraduate Symposium for Emerging Researchers in Ageing in early June, and involvement with the NZAG Conference in November. The monthly newsletters and research reports will also continue.

The NZiRA Advisory Board (with Diana Crossan, Retirement Commissioner, as Chair) is supporting the development of a new Visiting Fellow series, for which sponsorship will be sought from 2008. Building research partnerships and developing successful funding bids will also be a continuing focus for NZiRA's work.

Sally Keeling

Canterbury Branch President, NZAG

Wanted for a Research Project

Health Professionals Involved in Social Gerontology Research

To participate in a study that will explore:

1. Processes of interviewing older people
2. Handling sensitive data

Results will be available through publication, and are intended to be used for teaching research methods.

Participation will involve an interview of 1-1.5 hours.

For further information please contact:

Dr Linda Robertson

Email: LindaR@tek.otago.ac.nz

Or Dr Beatrice Hale

Email: bahale@xtra.co.nz

Web Sight

In this regular column we sample a few of the interesting resources related to ageing available on the internet.

AgeSource Worldwide

The number of websites related to ageing is growing every day. AgeSource Worldwide allows you to search over 300 internet information sources (each having over 1000 items) about ageing. Health-related issues, including Alzheimer's disease and long term care, are the topics most frequently covered by these information resources. However, many other topics are represented in AgeSource Worldwide - from age discrimination to wills and estate planning. You can search internationally or narrow your search to New Zealand or Oceania.

www.aarp.org/research/agesource/index

Quality of long-term care

How do four developed countries - England, Australia, Germany and Japan - seek to assure the quality of their long-term care (LTC) services? An AARP Public Policy Institute Issue Paper examines the LTC quality assurance systems of each of these countries, and discusses the implications of the reported experiences for other countries. The full report, or a shorter summary, is available online.

www.aarp.org/research/longtermcare/quality/2007_05_ltc

Handbooks for care-givers

The Institute of Gerontology at Wayne State University in the US maintains a very impressive website with a huge array of resources. Included on their website is a set of downloadable handbooks for carers whose loved ones have made the transition to long-term care. The booklets include:

- Making the most of visits to nursing home residents who have dementia
- Taking care of yourself while taking care of a loved one who is in a nursing home
- Understanding and dealing with problem behaviours of nursing home residents
- Mental health and nursing home residents
- Living with loss: When a loved one dies in a nursing home

These are available to download from www.iog.wayne.edu/agingandhealthre sources



Professor Stuart Parker

Professor Stuart Parker, Sheffield Institute for Studies of Ageing, is visiting New Zealand in April and May 2007.

His research focuses on the application of health services research methods to clinical practice research, with particular reference to health assessment of older patients, the hospital discharge of elderly patients, rehabilitation and long-term care.

Stuart has maintained an interest in the biology of ageing and age related diseases. This is currently pursued through research on the molecular genetics of COPD.

Stuart is a consultant physician at Barnsley District General Hospital where he is lead clinician in Medicine for Older People. The Barnsley clinical service has gained national recognition within the UK for the quality of its services for falls and fractures, stroke, continence, and acute and intermediate care for frail older people.

Stuart will be giving open lectures in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.

Thursday 3 May: Auckland

Health Services for our Future Selves.
6 - 7 pm: School of Engineering Theatre, University of Auckland.

Wednesday 9 May: Wellington

Health Services for our Future Selves.
12.30 - 1.30 pm: Government Building, Lecture Theatre 1

New Zealand Association of Gerontology (Wellington Branch).
Discharging older people from inpatient hospital care.
5.30 - 7 pm: Rutherford House, Lecture Theatre 1

Thursday 10 May: Christchurch

Discharging older people from inpatient hospital care.
12.30 - 1.30 pm: Grand Round, The Princess Margaret Hospital, 5th Floor Lecture Theatre.

New Zealand Association of Gerontology (Canterbury Branch)
5.30 - 7 pm: Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind, Training Room, 96 Bristol St, St Albans.

Reminder - Call for Abstracts

Abstracts for the NZAG Conference close 5pm, Friday 15th June, 2007.
For more information visit www.gerontology.org.nz

Conferences 2007

May 1-4 Adelaide, Australia

Australian Health Promotion Association 17th National Conference.
Grass Roots to Global Action: Health Promotion in Challenging Environments.
Web: www.healthpromotion.org.au

May 9-11 Glasgow, Scotland

A Legacy of Learning: International conference on learning in later life.
Web: www.cll.strath.ac.uk/legacy/index

May 22-25 Sydney, Australia

Australasian Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine Annual Scientific Meeting.
Web: www.dcconferences.com.au

May 29-June 1 Perth, Australia

Alzheimer's Australia Conference.
A Journey of Passion and Purpose: The Next 100 years.
Web: www.alzheimers2007conference.com.au

June 16-19 Toronto, Canada

Festival of International Conferences on Caregiving, Disability, Ageing and Technology.
Web: www.ficcdat.ca

June 18-21 Montréal, Canada

International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons (TRANSED).
Benchmarking, Evaluation and Vision for the Future.
Web: www.tc.gc.ca/pol/en/transed2007/message_TC_e.asp

June 28-29 Sydney, Australia

4th National Conference on Depression in the Elderly.
Successful Ageing: Countering Depression in Old Age.
Web: www.hammond.com.au

July 12-15 Adelaide, Australia

Cognitive Aging Conference in the Land Down Under.
Web: www.cos.gatech.edu/cac

September 3 Christchurch, NZ

IANA (International Academy of Nutrition & Aging) Pre-conference Seminar (in association with NZ Dietetic Association Conference).
Web: www.dietitians.org.nz

September 5-6 Adelaide, Australia

IANA (International Academy of Nutrition and Aging) 4th International Conference.
Web: www.fcconventions.com.au/MedicineAgeingandNutrition2007/

September 6-8 Sheffield, UK

Annual Conference of The British Society of Gerontology.
Realities of Ageing: Research into Action
Web: www.bsg2007.org.uk/

October 10-13 Caracas, Venezuela

23rd International ADI Conference.
Web: www.adi2007.org

October 15-17 Takapuna, NZ

NZHHA conference.
Reaching for our Goals.
Web: www.conferencebrokers.co.nz

October 22-25 Beijing, China

8th Asia/Oceania IAGG Regional Congress of Gerontology.
Web: www.aog2007.org

October 25-28 Calgary, Canada

35th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Canadian Association of Gerontology.
Web: www.cagacg.ca/english

November 14-16 Hamilton, NZ

NZAG Conference.
Ageing: The Everyday Experience.
Web: www.gerontology.org.nz

November 16-20 San Francisco, USA

59th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America.
Web: www.geron.org/AnnualMeeting

November 21-23 Adelaide, Australia

Australian Association of Gerontology 40th National Conference.
Beyond 2007: Ageing, Evolution and Revolution.
Web: www.aagconference.com

Editor's Desk

The next Newsletter will be circulated in August 2007.

Send contributions to:

Dee Ferris, Editor NZAG Newsletter
C/- Health Ed Trust NZ Inc,
PO Box 130184, Christchurch 8141.
Email: dee@healthedtrust.org.nz

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 one of the following people:

Waikato Branch Waikato@gerontology.org.nz

Canterbury Branch Secretary - Fenn Shaw • fshaw@clear.net.nz
Phone 03 353 9935 (W) PO Box 21182, Edgeware, Christchurch.

Auckland Branch Secretary - Sarah Walter-Puttich
SarahWP@adhb.govt.nz • Phone 09 623 6470 ext 4011

Wellington Branch Secretary - Dr Susan Gee
nzagwellington@paradise.net.nz • Phone 04 477 9988

Websites to visit...

New Zealand: www.gerontology.org.nz

Australia: www.aag.asn.au • International: www.iagg.com.br

