



# INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GERONTOLOGY AND GERIATRICS

Press release  
September 10th, 2009

**The International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) celebrates its 60th anniversary in Brussels today**  
A contribution to understanding and research on Ageing

Brussels, September 10th 2010 - World Alzheimer's Day, each year on September 21st, raises awareness on the disease and its disorders. And with good reason: population ageing represents a major challenge for Europe in the future... Today, acknowledged experts in Gerontology and Geriatrics highlighted the importance of age-related issues and their impact on Society. They got together in Brussels during **an academic session organized to celebrate the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics' (IAGG), 60th anniversary**. Pr. Jean-Pierre BAEYENS, General Secretary of the Belgian Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics and European Chair of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG), calls European authorities to create a «European Union Institute of Ageing Research». An organization of this type is necessary to coordinate European research programs: what is currently undergone, where and when. Two important objectives can be identified: avoid double occurrences and make a better use of the meagre resources actually available.

**Today the IAGG blows its 60 candles in the presence of Mr. Yves LETERME, Prime Minister of Belgium.** The Association was founded in July 1950, when a group of twenty multidisciplinary international researchers (demographers, sociologists, biologists, physiologists...) met in Liège, Belgium. Their aim: get a comprehensive understanding of the Ageing process by studying all its different components. Since, IAGG has become an international organization, represented in 64 countries on the five continents around the world: Europe, North America, South America, Asia/Oceania and more recently Africa. In July 2009, France organized the last world congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics in Paris, where more than 6.000 participants were reported.

**Initiated by the IAGG, a Global Research Network on Health and Aging** is currently under construction. It will identify 500 Centres of Excellence worldwide dedicated to social, biological, behavioural and clinical gerontology and promote age-related issues and research. In France, the current IAGG President, Pr. Bruno VELLAS, Chief of Geriatric Department at the Toulouse University Hospital and Director of the Toulouse Gérontopôle, has been asked to lead the call for project related to the creation of one the country's 5 future University-Hospital Institutes (IHU). The Toulouse project application will concern "Ageing and disability prevention".

## **The Nobel Prize in Medicine 2009: Telomeres and Ageing**

During autumn 2009, the Nobel Prize in Medicine was awarded to three American scientists, Elizabeth BLACKBURN, Carol GREIDER and Jack SZOTAK, who discovered how telomeres (chromosome extremities that register history and allows cell replication) protect chromosomes from damage. They also discovered the telomerase, an enzyme that keeps telomeres long and complete. This new discovery is particularly interesting in cancer research. But it is also a revolution for Ageing: since Man lives longer, telomeres shorten; and shorten again in a natural process that contributes to ageing in individuals (at the cell and organic levels as well as at the systemic level). During this special academic session, Pr. Athanase BENETOS, Chef of Geriatric Department at the Nancy University Hospital in France, and current IAGG Treasurer, reminds us that this discovery paves the way for new perspectives in the detection and risk prevention of age-related diseases.

For further information, you can contact:

Pr. Bruno VELLAS, IAGG President / Pr. Alain FRANCO, IAGG Secretary General & Vice President  
IAGG / Faculté de Médecine, Institut du Vieillissement / 37 Allées Jules Guesde / 31000 Toulouse / FRANCE  
Tél : +33 (0)5.61.14.56.39 / Fax : +33 (0)5.61.14.56.40 E-mail : [seynes@cict.fr](mailto:seynes@cict.fr) Website : [www.iagg.info](http://www.iagg.info)