NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH MEDICINE

22 August 2011 **Media Release**

Aftershocks, public health and the re-emergence of Christchurch

With continuing aftershocks and some Christchurch residents still coping with very basic living conditions, it is timely that the New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine Annual Scientific Meeting in Wellington this week will be examining how its Fellows continue to respond to the public health needs of a community still in shock.

Public health covers not only the prevention of disease on a population level; it also ensures the safety of our drinking water and other factors affecting our living environment.

Public health physicians have been at the forefront in both the response and recovery phases of the Christchurch earthquake. With many personally affected, they have continued to respond to the sometimes overwhelming public health needs and will present on all aspects of emergency preparedness and recovery.

Well regarded speakers from around New Zealand will be sharing their experiences and offer insights into how and where we build houses and apartments can have a profound effect on health. There are opportunities provided by the reconstruction of Christchurch. Public health physicians from Community and Public Health, Canterbury District Health Board, will be discussing in-depth how the February 22nd earthquake and ongoing aftershocks pose tremendous challenges and threats to public health, whilst also providing some exciting opportunities to rebuild a healthier Christchurch.

Key note speaker, Professor Philippa Howden-Chapman will be presenting findings from community trials that support the importance of healthy housing to reduce poverty and improve health.

President of the College, Dr William Rainger says "Public health physicians play an important role in protecting the public. The earthquake in Christchurch has highlighted the quality of public health physicians in this country. It also shows how an effective public health service can prevent a disaster becoming an ongoing tragedy through the promotion of good public health practices and guarding against preventable illness."

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine Annual Scientific Meeting will be held from 24-26th August 2011 in Wellington.

Ends