



## Wellington hosts Immunology Conference

4 June 2009

Today, Thursday 4 June, immunologists from across the country will converge in Wellington for the annual New Zealand branch of the Australasian Society of Immunology conference.

Organised by The University of Auckland, the University of Otago and the Malaghan Institute of Medical Research, the goal of this two day meeting is to develop collaborative and integrative immune-based research strategies that can be used to more effectively treat diseases such as cancer and tuberculosis.

“Every day our immune systems work hard to protect us against diseases such as the common cold, flu or even cancer, but more research is needed before we can fully exploit the potential of this unique resource,” said meeting convenor Dr Elizabeth Forbes from the Malaghan Institute. “By sharing research discoveries we further our understanding of immunological processes, bringing us closer to improving the human condition.”

The keynote speaker for the meeting is renowned immunologist Dr Ethan Shevach from the National Institutes of Health, MD, USA, who will present his cutting-edge research on immune regulation and autoimmunity.

For reasons not completely understood, in autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis, gastritis and arthritis the body attacks its own cells. Understanding how and why this happens is vital for the development of appropriate therapies for the treatment of these diseases.

The meeting will also feature talks from international scientists including Dr Mariapia Degli-Esposti, from the Lions Eye Institute, Australia; Prof Wolfgang Weninger, from the Centenary Institute, Australia; and Assoc Prof Ben Marsland and Prof Nicola Harris from the ETH (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology), Zurich, Switzerland.

The meeting is sponsored by Abacus ALS, Becton Dickinson, Immunet, Invitrogen, Norrie Biotech and Pharmaco.

**The Malaghan Institute of Medical Research** is New Zealand’s premier vaccine and immunology research centre and is based at Victoria University’s Kelburn campus, Wellington. The Institute operates independently and is a charitable trust. Researchers at the Malaghan Institute are focused on developing innovative ways to harness the strength and potency of the immune system, the body’s own natural defence against disease, to treat cancer, asthma, arthritis, multiple sclerosis and infectious disease.

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This media release is also available for viewing on our website [www.malaghan.org.nz](http://www.malaghan.org.nz) with links to relevant individuals and research groups.