Dr Judith (Judi) Dawn Donnell
11 May 1956–31 January 2017

It is with great pride and sadness that I write this account of the career of my mother Judi. General practitioner, sports doctor, business owner and manager, company director, church elder, triathlete, amazing mother and friend, who died 31 January 2017 after a short and traumatic illness from mesothelioma.

Judi had been a general practitioner for 30 years and, with her business partner Dr Mike Williams, developed the Hinemoa House Family Health Centre in Rotorua. Judi graduated from Auckland Medical School in 1980, became a house surgeon, gained her Diploma of Obstetrics in 1982 and then became Paediatrics Registrar at Rotorua Hospital. She subsequently worked in general practice for a year in Rotorua before moving, with her husband Russell, to practice in England while Russell completed his PhD. While in England, she completed the UK General Practice Training Scheme and practised in two different clinics in Leicestershire.

Returning to Rotorua in 1987, she went into partnership with Dr David Rowe and then later with Dr Mike Williams. Judi was extremely proud of this practice and her colleagues who were like family to her. They were in the midst of merging with another practice to create Ruatahi Medical Centre when her illness struck.

Judi was a board member of the Rotorua Area Primary Health Organisation and also provided community health support to Western Heights High School in Rotorua.

Her love of sport saw her complete a Diploma in Sports Medicine in 1999, and become the first woman doctor of the Bay MBCHB, Dip Obst, Dip Sports Medicine, FRNZCGP
of Plenty Rugby Team, the Steamers. She was with them for four years—two years while they were in the Second Division and two years in the First Division. Her family became very used to seeing her on television as she worked with the team as they travelled around the country. Trying to help rugby players who were typically 0.5m taller than her was always a source of amusement, but they loved her and she them. Along the way she became very knowledgeable about rugby, a side benefit greatly appreciated by Russell. She also served as match doctor for the Chiefs and provided medical cover for many other sports teams when they were playing in Rotorua.

Judi was a keen and accomplished sports-woman. She challenged herself in the water, running, road biking and mountain biking. She ran marathons, twice completed the 160km round Taupō bike ride, competed in the cycle Tour of Northland and many triathlons where she was very competitive in her age group.

Judi was also very committed to her church activities. She was both an Elder in her church and also served as a board member on the Rotorua District Presbyterian Council.

A keen and enthusiastic cook, Judi loved experimenting with new cuisine and trying out the results on her family and wonderful friends with whom she enjoyed spending time.

She will be much missed by her immediate family—her husband Russell, her daughter Rebecca, her son Sam, her mother Mardi and her sisters Liz, Deborah, Robin and Cate. Her encouragement, warm support and ‘go for it’ attitude will be missed by all her friends, her colleagues, her patients and fellow athletes.