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OCCIDEAS FOR ASBESTOS EXPOSURE ASSESSMENT IN THE AUSTRALIAN MESOTHELIOMA REGISTRY

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Objectives To assess asbestos exposure from all sources for all cases of mesothelioma reported to the Australian Mesothelioma Registry (AMR).

Methods OccIDEAS is an expert system database developed to assist experts in the assessment of occupational exposures from structured job specific questionnaires or modules (JSMs). Unlike other JSM systems however, OccIDEAS has programmed into the JSMs rules for automatic exposure assessment which are fired depending upon answers to specific questions. These rules were developed by experts and are displayed following a computer assisted telephone interview (CATI), but may be manually over-ruled during the assessment stage of a study.

Results We developed 12 occupational modules and one environmental module for use in the Australian Mesothelioma Registry. Rules for systematic exposure assessment of asbestos were developed and applied to all the modules.

Conclusions Until recently, the application of OccIDEAS has been limited to cancer case-control studies. We have used the OccIDEAS platform successfully in the AMR and have also for the first time developed and used an environmental module in the platform. The approach taken by the AMR however, is transparent and highly repeatable. It is also amenable to validity checks and should reduce the assessment time taken by the expert to assess exposure to asbestos.