Peering through the Retrospectoscope:

Taking an Occupational History

Dr Euan Thompson

Occupational Physician
Prevalence of Occupational Cancers

- Incidence “>5000 new cases per year”
- “11% of cancers (men) / 2% (women)”
  - Skin
  - Mesothelioma
    - together, ≈80%
- “3.6m Australians may be exposed to ≥1 carcinogen at work”
- <8% compensated
  - 73% for mesothelioma
“What do we do all week?”
“What do you do for a living?”

- Job title
- Job description
“What do you do at work?”

- Job Task Analysis
The Occupational History

- Employment history
- Occupational Exposure
- Non-occupational exposure
Employment History

- **Jobs since school (or earlier...)**
  - Date, duration
  - Employer(s)
  - Location
    - Overseas?
    - Hours of work / Shifts / Swings

- Don’t forget 2nd jobs!

- Anyone else similarly affected?

- Beware “recall bias”
  - External corroboration
    - Employer records
    - Pay records
Categories

- Biological
- Chemical
  - Forms (eg, organic / inorganic, compounds)
- Physical
  - Eg UV
- Psychosocial?
What “controls” in place?

- Elimination
- Substitution
- Engineering controls “hardware”
  - Eg ventilation
- Rostering / “software”
Controls...

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
Hazard Analysis

**Known Agents**

- **IARC**
  - 1. Carcinogenic
  - 2A. Probably Carcinogenic
  - 2B. Possibly Carcinogenic
  - 3. Unclassifiable
  - 4. Probably not

**Unknown Agents**
Non-Occupational

- Home Renovations
- Environmental Exposures
- Hobbies
- Habits
  - Smoking, alcohol
  - Sunlight
- Family members
  - Occupation, exposure
  - Family history
Exposure

- Hazard vs Risk
  - “Dose”
    - Dose-response
    - Dose-risk
Exposure

- TWA
  - “Time-weighted average”

- $1 + 1 = ?$