

September 25, 2009

Media Statement

**WA RESEARCHERS TO LOOK INTO POSSIBLE WORK AND BREAST CANCER LINK**

Starting this month, West Australian researchers will be approaching 3000 local women to participate in a new project to find out whether our workplaces and conditions may be contributing to breast cancer.

A Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) research team are sending letters out asking for Perth women's help in searching for triggers and links within our surrounds and employment habits, including shift work, that may cause or protect against this tragic disease.

WAIMR's Associate Professor Lin Fritschi said the team would examine lifestyle conditions and genetics of WA women across a variety of working sectors, aged between 18 and 80 years of age as part of the Breast Cancer, Environment and Employment Study (BCEES).

"The study will compare women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer against those who have not to investigate whether there are any common patterns like shift work, toxins in the environment and work-life balance that may point to risk factors for the cancer," she said.

"We will be assessing factors like pesticides in or near the workplace, pregnancy and fertility, and physical activity.

Associate Professor Fritschi said women approached to take part will be contacted by mail, after being chosen at random from the Western Australian Electoral Roll, and those with a history of breast cancer would be confidentially selected from the WA Cancer Registry.

"If you have received a letter from us, we really encourage you to take part in something that has the potential to help millions of families avoid the devastation of losing a loved-one to breast cancer," she said.

"With your help, we will be armed vital information that we hope will help future generations avoid the fear and tragedy of breast cancer."

The study will use a world-first, state-of-the-art software solution, OccIDEAS, to analyse the data with speed and accuracy.

OccIDEAS, created by Research IT Online – the software development arm of Queensland-based Data Scientists – will analyse data with speed, taking over the arduous task of reading through results and helps researchers gain accurate results faster.

"With the OccIDEAS program, we can set rules and hone in on any possible linkages much faster than if we were doing it all by hand, so if we're going to find something, we'll be able to do it sooner," Associate Professor Fritschi said.

It's estimated OccIDEAS will save researchers at least 30 per cent of time in analysing questionnaires.

The BCEES is being funded by The University of Western Australia and the National Health and Medical Research Council.

For more information on the Study, please visit <https://bcees.org.au>(.)

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