The key criteria for diagnosing an occupational disease in any individual are:

1. The clinical features must fit in with what is known about the health effects following exposure to the specified agent. The symptoms and signs should fit, and this may be supported in some cases by suitable diagnostic tests.

2. There must be indication of sufficient occupational exposure. Evidence on exposure may be obtained through taking the occupational history, results of occupational hygiene measurements taken at the workplace, biological monitoring results, and/or records of incidents of over-exposure.

3. The time interval between exposure and effect must be consistent with what is known about the natural history and progress of the disease.

4. Exposure must precede health effects. However, in some conditions such as occupational asthma, a past history of childhood asthma and/or asthmatic attacks occurring before occupational exposure, does not automatically rule out the possibility of a workplace agent causing subsequent asthmatic attacks.

5. The differential diagnosis must be considered. There are non-occupational conditions that have similar clinical features as occupational diseases, and a physician will have to take this into account before diagnosing or excluding an occupational disease.