



Paleoepidemiology of a central California prehistoric population from CA-ALA-329: II. Degenerative disease.

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Abstract: Degenerative lesions are scored and frequencies of involvement are computed for a skeletal collection from Ca-ALA-329, a prehistoric site on the southeastern side of San Francisco Bay, dating from 500 A.D. up to European contact. A large earthmound site, excavations conducted there by San Jose State University retrieved close to 300 burials. For this epidemiological analysis, reasonably complete and aged skeletons representing 77 adult females and 90 adult males are available. Degenerative changes are scored macroscopically in an ordinal fashion for the large fibro-cartilagenous joints between adjacent vertebral bodies (vertebral osteophytosis) as well as the small apophyseal articulations of the spine. In addition, in the peripheral skeleton degenerative changes are scored in the temporo-mandibular, shoulder, elbow, hip, and knee joints as well as the small articulations of the hands and feet. The most common degenerative changes in the spine are seen between the vertebral bodies of the lower lumbar region. In the peripheral skeleton the highest involvement of degenerative disease is seen in the hands and feet. Compared to other relevant osteological samples, this group of hunting-gathering California Indians shows more degenerative changes than settled agriculturists (from Pecos Pueblo, New Mexico) but substantially less frequent involvement than in arctic hunters (Alaskan Eskimos).

Notes: From: Fortune, Robert et al. 1993. The Health of the Inuit of North America: A Bibliography from the Earliest Times through 1990. University of Alaska Anchorage. Citation number 159.