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HOSPITAL DETROIT
HENRY FORD HOSPITAL MEDICAL JOURNAL

33-37 1985

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For changes of address, please enclose the old address label, give the complete new address, and allow six weeks for processing.

The Journal publishes the work of any current or former staff member or resident of Henry Ford Hospital, alumni, and participants in academic and scientific activities, meetings, and symposia sponsored by Henry Ford Hospital. The Journal is listed by Index Medicus and is intended to be a broad scientific forum for all areas of interest: clinical, research, technical, administrative, patient care delivery. Complete instructions for authors wishing to submit a manuscript are printed at the back of the first issue of each year.

Back copies of the Journal are available from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N Zeeb Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48106, as 3.5 mm microfilms (Vols 1-20) or as 16 mm films (Vols 19-present).
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Paleopaetology (the study of prehistoric times) is based on the premise that the pathologic features of ancient human populations are indicative of the pathologic conditions in the general population of the same period. Although the evidence is not always clear, historical trends and periodic patterns can contribute to the understanding of human disease.

On the other hand, organ donors (from ancient cadavers) are often difficult to come by, and the disease spectrum with the latter is not always clear. From the standpoint of paleopathology, the evidence concerning ancient human populations is incomplete and sometimes misleading. One way to investigate this problem is to study the ancient cadavers themselves.

Because it is often difficult to relate organ donors from ancient human populations to modern medicine, structural disease has been studied more frequently than functional disease. However, the role of functional disease in ancient disease has been largely ignored. In an attempt to investigate this problem, the three-dimensional visualization of the types of ancient disease has been studied. Using this technique, the disease can be viewed in three-dimensions.

Over the years, various ancient mummies have become available for study. Many of these mummies are from ancient Egypt, where paleopathologists have been able to study them extensively. These mummies have been examined using a variety of techniques, including electron microscopy, X-ray diffraction, and light microscopy. The results of these studies have been presented in this article.