A Comparative Analysis of Two Skeletal Samples and Enamel Hypoplasia

A SSHA Presentation by

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Abstract

The field of bioarchaeology is a relatively small subfield where an anthropologist with osteological training excavates, cleans, and/or studies human remains in an archaeological context. This is different from forensic anthropology, but just as significant in searching for the identity or lifestyle of the deceased human. This project focuses on the prevalence of enamel hypoplasia (EH) in skeletal remains analyzed in a Bioarchaeological lens within London Museum's Wellcome Osteological Research Database. Tooth enamel is laid down in a series of layers as an individual matures, so if there are lines or pits in the teeth, this means they were lacking nutrients needed for enamel production. EH is a pathology which mainly presents as linear lines and usually indicates malnutrition, lead poisoning, or a congenital condition the individual suffered during development. EH is more prevalent in earlier-developed teeth, around the years of weaning and pre-pubescent years, but also can continue into adulthood. The two cemeteries covered are the medieval cemetery St. Mary Grace and post-medieval cemetery St. Benet Sherehog. For the time periods, medieval covers 1066-1547 Common Era (CE) and post-medieval covers 1547-1852 CE. Within these two times periods were massive events which could have caused EH trauma including: The Black Death, The Potato Famine, and Industrialization. St. Mary Grace is located in the Royal Mint, East Smithfield Street, London, England while St. Benet Sherehog is located 1 Poultry, Queen Victoria Street, London, England. This project aims to educate individuals on the causes of EH and how it fits into both a bioarchaeological lens and today's society. If the cause of EH is known, there can be steps to prevent the trauma or pay closer attention to the age years in which it is most prevalent.