

## Palaeopathology

SECOND EDITION

*Palaeopathology* is an evidence-based guide to the principal types of pathological lesions often found in human remains and how to diagnose them. Tony Waldron presents an innovative method of arriving at a diagnosis in the skeleton by applying what he refers to as 'operational definitions'. The method ensures that those who study bones will use the same criteria for diagnosing disease, thereby enabling valid comparisons to be made between studies. Waldron's book is based on modern clinical knowledge and provides background information on the natural history of bone disease. In addition, the volume demonstrates how results from studies should be analysed, methods of determining the frequency of disease and other types of epidemiological analysis.

This edition includes new chapters on the development of palaeopathology, basic concepts, health and disease, diagnosis and spinal pathology. Chapters on analysis and interpretation have been thoroughly revised and enlarged.

Tony Waldron is Professor at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. An epidemiologist and consulting physician at three London teaching hospitals, he is the author of several hundred papers and books.

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Second Edition

Tony Waldron  
*University College London*



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## PREFACE

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I enjoyed writing the first edition of *Palaeopathology* but always felt that it was somehow incomplete, and so the second edition has been expanded to become more of a book about the principles and practice of palaeopathology than merely a diagnostic manual. To set the scene I have added a chapter on the development of the discipline; this is important because if you don't know where you have come from, it's difficult to know where best to go. There is an account of some of the theories concerning the nature of health and disease, which I hope (but don't really expect) will result in the word *health* being eliminated altogether from the palaeopathological vocabulary. The discussion on diagnosis has been enlarged with greater emphasis placed on the use of clinically based operational definitions than before. The aim here is to try to introduce rigour into the diagnosis of lesions seen in human remains; all too often it seems to me that diagnoses and inferences made by palaeopathologists are the result of a fevered imagination rather than cool science. The chapters on individual diseases have been revised and updated as necessary as has the chapter on epidemiology. If the only lesson drawn from this chapter is that the word *incidence* should never be used when discussing the frequency of disease in human remains, I will be content. I have put in a new chapter on 'inferences'. In many instances, authors make assumptions and interpretations about their observations that seem scarcely credible, with little basis in the clinical – or sometimes even biological – cannon of knowledge. I try to teach my students that there should be no speculation without validation, and it is this dictum that is the theme of the final chapter of the book.

Now a note about references. With several million references being published each year, there is not the remotest possibility that any book – any paper even – is going to up-to-date. In fact, with Google Scholar to hand, one wonders whether there is any point at all in giving references in a publication. I have included references so that, as one of my ex-teachers once said, the readers can see that

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I haven't made it all up. Where references are given, they are almost always to clinical or epidemiological sources, and I have made no attempt to include a survey of the palaeopathological literature, which, with a few notable exceptions, has made little contribution to our understanding of the nature or aetiology of disease.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank some close colleagues for their friendship, help, encouragement and support, particularly during some difficult periods in the last few years. In particular I thank Simon Hillson, Carolyn Rando, Daniel Antoine, Garrard Cole and Rebecca Watts. One of the great pleasures of my academic life has been contact with students, many of whom have been a joy to teach and who have since become friends and colleagues. I hope that at least some of you have enjoyed it as much as I have.

I cannot end without expressing my love and thanks to my family, without whom life would be very bleak indeed.