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Can osteophytes be used as age at death estimators? Testing correlations in skeletonized human remains with known age-at-death

Abbreviated title: Testing osteophytes and age-at-death correlations

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Highlights

- A relationship between age and degenerative joint changes have been reported.
- A sample of 604 adult individuals and 16 joints were examined to test correlations.
- Significant results were found between age-at-death and osteophytes.
- Low to moderate correlations were obtained for joints and for both sexes.
- Osteophytes are problematic as age indicator due to its multifactorial origin.

Abstract

Age-at-death estimation is one of the major challenges when establishing an adult skeleton biological profile. The presence of degenerative joint changes – e.g. osteophytes – has been regarded as a good postmaturity age indicator. This study assessed if a clear relationship between age and osteophytes exists. To accomplish this goal, a total of 16 joint surfaces, from the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee, and ankle, were examined in 604 adult individuals, of both sexes from two Portuguese Identified collections. Individuals had between 20 and 98 year old at death.

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