Paleopathological Patterns of Degenerative Arthropathy: Prevalence of Limb-Joint Osteoarthritis in Joseon People Skeletons

Dong Hoon Shin¹, Go-Un Jung², Chang Seok Oh¹, Myeung Ju Kim³, Eun-Kyoung Shin⁴ and Yi-Suk Kim²*

¹Department of Anatomy, Seoul National University College of Medicine, Seoul, Republic of Korea
²Forensic Anthropological Laboratory and Department of Anatomy, Ewha Womans University School of Medicine, Seoul, Republic of Korea
³Department of Anatomy, Dankook University College of Medicine, Cheonan, Republic of Korea
⁴Department of Social Welfare, Dankook University, Republic of Korea


ABSTRACT This study was performed to assess degenerative osteoarthritis (OA) in human skeletons from 15th to 19th century Joseon tombs of South Korea. The researchers performed anthropological examinations of OA in selected limb joints of Joseon skeletons and considered possible reasons for the revealed aspects of OA by focusing on lifestyle or occupational activity during that time. A total of 140 skeletons unearthed from Joseon tombs were evaluated and any pathological lesions in the articular surfaces of limb joints were carefully examined by gross inspection. Most of joints correlated linear degenerative changes over time, however, OA prevalence of knee joints was much higher in middle-aged group. The prevalence of OA at limb joints revealed in this study provides insights into the mobility patterns of pre-modern Korean people. Knowledge of OA in pre-modern samples will enrich our understanding of the developmental interactions that provide the basis of the disciplines of epidemiology and demography.