

Prostate cancer found in ancient Egyptian mummy

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(Medical Xpress) -- A new study published in the *International Journal of Paleopathology* reveals a case of prostate cancer in a 2,250-year-old mummy. The researchers also believe that cases of cancer at that time may not be as rare as previous research has noted.

The mummy, known as M1, was a male between the ages of 51 and 60 and researchers say he died a slow and painful death. Using high-resolution computerized tomography, the researchers, led by radiologist Carlos Prates, found multiple dense, small round tumors in the pelvis, lumbar spine, upper [arm bones](#) and [leg bones](#) in M1. These areas are the most common locations affected by metastatic [prostate cancer](#).

M1 is the oldest known case of prostate cancer discovered in Egypt but

not the oldest case in history. The oldest case of prostate cancer was discovered in 2007 in a 2,700-year-old Scythian king from Russia.

Previously it was believed that cancer was rare in this time period and that the increase in cancer cases came with the industrial age and increase in cancer carcinogens. A 1998 study in the *Journal of Paleopathology* showed that there were only 176 cases of cancer discovered in over tens of thousands of [skeletal remains](#) that had been examined.

However, Prates and his team believe that this number may not be accurate because previous researchers did not have the appropriate technology to detect cancer. The tumors discovered in M1 measured between 0.03 and 0.59 inches. The Multi Detector Computerized Tomography, or MDCT, scans used to detect these small tumors were not available until 2005 and any studies done before this time were not able to detect tumors this small.

Using this new technology, researchers hope to get a better understanding of cancer's beginnings and the possibility of using information gathered to contribute to finding a cure for cancer.

More information: International Journal of Paleopathology;
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