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MEDIA RELEASE

Surgeons investigate 1,000 year old multi-trauma case

Wednesday 15 December, 2010

Surgeons working with an archaeologist at the South Australian Museum have investigated the remarkable case of an Australian Aboriginal man who survived multi-trauma approximately 1,000 years ago.

Writing in this month's issue of the *ANZ Journal of Surgery*, surgeons Mr Brian Cornish and Associate Professor Lucian Solomon, and expert in Indigenous Australian archaeology, Dr Keryn Walshe, report that they investigated the skeletal remains of an adult Australian Aboriginal with healed fractures of the right femur and humerus. The time of death was assessed by carbon dating, while the sex and approximate age of the subject were determined by the skeleton's morphometry. The fractured bones were assessed by visual inspection, plain radiographs and CT scanning.

"The remains were of a male aged approximately 50 years at the time of his death, approximately 1,000 years ago, well preceding European settlement," Professor Solomon said.

"Analysis of the malunions indicated that all fractures occurred in one traumatic event, normally a life threatening injury combination, and that the subject survived for years after this incident, despite no or failed active treatment of his fractures.

"This is the remarkable thing about this case. These days, surviving multi-trauma is strongly associated with emergent resuscitation and treatment in modern medical facilities. Multi-trauma survival before the advent of modern medicine is likely to have been extremely uncommon, particularly in primitive societies.

"The survival of this man, living in a primitive society, after multi-trauma reflects an impressive depth of nursing and social support in a community of hunter-gatherers," Professor Solomon said.

The study was approved by Kaurna Nation Cultural Heritage Association and the Ethics Committee of Royal Adelaide Hospital.

The *ANZ Journal of Surgery*, established more than 70 years and published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.

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