

## **Health Trends Among Roman Period Burials**

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Changes in the overall health of Romans from the Republic to the Imperial period are explored. To do so, dry bone skeletal lesions are recorded among adult burials from two important Roman period sites; the Roman city of Aquinum found in current town of Casilina (Republic Romans) and the Roman necropolis of San Donato and Bivio CH found in the city of Urbino, Italy (Imperial Romans). The Republic is traditionally dated to 509 BC, and ending in 27 BC; while the Imperial Period covers the period of AD 1 to 375. In total, 145 burials are examined. Lesions include those associated with Degenerative Joint Disease of long bones, osteophytes from the vertebral bones (Osteoarthritis), Periostitis of long bone shafts, dental defects (enamel hypoplasia, cavities, and abscesses), healed fractures, healed cranial pitting (parietals and eye orbits). Results of a Fisher's Exact two-tailed test on the frequencies of skeletal lesions between Aquinum Republic burials and Imperial burials from Aquinum and Urbino are presented and it is clear that the Imperial period burials show higher frequency of most skeletal lesions. There are other indicators of a trend of poor health among Imperial Romans, they include an estimated life expectancy for Urbino, Romans at birth of under 27 years of age and a height trend among them that show that the Imperial Italian males and females are smaller than previous cultural periods. In summary, the health status for Romans changed over time resulting in an increase set of problems related to inter-personal violence and diet. This may reflect the difficulty in maintaining the Empire by the common people

as they served in the military and provided resources to support its expansion and maintenance. Despite the considerable advantage that the Roman Imperial culture offered its citizens, it came at a very high price that appears to be reflected in numerous ailments seen in the Imperial burials.

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