

International alliance to unlock secrets of Egyptian mummies

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Two world-renowned teams of experts on Egyptian mummies have joined forces in an international effort to better understand disease and its treatment in ancient Egypt.

The University of Manchester's Centre for Biomedical Egyptology and Cairo's National Research Center have signed a formal agreement to enhance future academic research and teaching in the field.

The Manchester-Cairo alliance will promote cooperation between the two institutions by supporting joint research activities and encouraging visits and exchanges by their staff and students.

"This is a unique opportunity to work with Egypt's foremost, scientific-research institution and share our expertise," said Professor Rosalie David, head of Egyptian-mummy studies in Manchester.

"By creating this partnership we hope to be able to shed more light on the diseases and ailments that afflicted the ancient Egyptians, and on the medical treatments used thousands of years ago."

One of the initial joint studies will be the first scientifically-based identification of the therapeutic elements of the medicines used by the ancient Egyptians.

Members of both teams will also investigate the craniofacial characteristics of ancient Egyptian skulls dating back some 5,000 years - to the time when the earliest pyramids were built.

Researchers will also pursue a study of disease patterns, including schistosomiasis, a debilitating parasitic disease that the Manchester group has been studying for several years.

The relationship was proposed by the President of the National Research Center, Professor Hany El-Nazer, and follows a visit to the Cairo Center by six members of the Manchester team in January.

During the 10-day visit Manchester experts took part in a workshop on the biological evaluation of human remains from ancient Egypt, giving lectures and leading discussions with staff and postgraduate students from universities and museums in Egypt.

"The workshop was an excellent opportunity for the two groups to discuss their current research projects and to share their knowledge with others," added Professor David.

Source: University of Manchester

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