

Tutankhamen fathered twins

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Two foetuses found in the tomb of Tutankhamen may have been twins and were very likely to have been the children of the teenage Pharaoh, according to the anatomist who first studied the mummified remains of the young King in the 1960s.

Robert Connolly, who is working with the Egyptian authorities to analyse the mummified remains of Tutankhamen and the two stillborn children, will discuss the new findings at the Pharmacy and Medicine in Ancient Egypt Conference at The University of Manchester today.

Mr Connolly says: "The work carried out by Catherine Hellier in Norway and I suggests that the two foetuses in the tomb of Tutankhamen could be twins despite their very different size and thus fit better as a single pregnancy for his young wife. This increases the likelihood of them being Tutankhamen's children.

"I studied one of the mummies, the larger one, back in 1979, determined the blood group data from this baby mummy and compared it with my 1969 blood grouping of Tutankhamen. The results confirmed that this larger foetus could indeed be the daughter of Tutankhamen.

"Now we believe that they are twins and they were both his children. The forthcoming DNA study on them by Dr Zahi Hawass's group in Egypt will contribute another key piece to this question."

Mr Connolly, Senior Lecturer in Physical Anthropology at the University of Liverpool's Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Biology, adds:

"It is a very exciting finding which will not only paint a more detailed picture of this famous young King's life and death, it will also tell us more about his lineage."

Conference director Professor Rosalie David, of The University of Manchester's Faculty of Life Sciences, says: "We are very proud to have Mr Connolly speaking at the conference and are extremely excited about his new findings. Tutankhamen is such an important figure in Egyptology - he was a fascinating character whose tomb and indeed body has given us so much information about life in Ancient Egypt, and it seems will continue to do so for some time yet."

More than 100 delegates from 10 countries, including the Director of the Cultural Bureau of the Egyptian Embassy in the UK and researchers from Egypt's Conservation of Medicinal Plants project in Sinai and the British Museum, are attending the conference, hosted by the KNH Centre for Biomedical Egyptology at The University of Manchester, in conjunction with the National Research Centre in Cairo, Egypt, and sponsored by The Leverhulme Trust.

The event follows the successful Pharmacy in Ancient Egypt Conference held in Cairo in 2007.

The conference, the first international conference aiming to bring together the two elements of ancient Egyptian healthcare practises: pharmacy and medicine, will also hear how 70% of the pharmaceutical ingredients used in medicines by the ancient Egyptians are still being used today.

Professor Rosalie David's team and Professor Mohamed Demerdash have studied prescriptions written on papyrus, diagnosing and treating ailments such as back ache (treated with saffron) and rheumatism (celery). They are also studying medicinal plants used by Bedouin tribes

to see if they are the same as those used by the ancient Egyptians, thus providing a link with modern times.

Professor David says: "Our work shows that the ancient Egyptians preceded the Greeks in developing Pharmacy. These were not magic spells but pharmaceutical products, some of which are still in use in modern times."

Other keynote speakers will discuss surviving craniofacial trauma, cerebral palsy, dentistry and diet in ancient Egypt.

Provided by University of Manchester

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