INTRODUCTION

BIOARCHAEOLOGY OF CARE research identifies and analyses evidence for disability and health-related care in the past, and is case-study-based, contextualised and cross-disciplinary. Triggered by physical indicators in human remains suggesting a period of survival or a need for care, the methodologies can provide a window into the values, beliefs, knowledge, skills and relationships that existed within social and economic organisation of all (whether directly or indirectly). The bioarchaeology of care looks at aspects of the lives and lifeways of those who cared, and those who were cared for, which might otherwise remain invisible.1

The INDEX OF CARE (www.indexofcare.org) is an on-line instrument for assisting researchers to ‘think through’ a bioarchaeology of care study.2 Linked websites prompt consideration of relevant biological and archaeological variables; operationalise key concepts such as ‘disability’, ‘care’ and ‘agency’; facilitate ordering and analysis of evidence; and help in achieving rigour and transparency throughout the research process.2,3 Triggered by physical indicators in human remains suggesting a period of survival with or without evidence of disease, trauma, or other complications requiring care in the past, this paper aims to offer a key to index a person’s ability to cope with the effects of disease; wherever relevant, the Index urges utmost caution in assessment and interpretation.

The Index contains four steps corresponding to the bioarchaeology of care stages, and all provide the rationale for the material they cover. The Index is non-prescriptive; most items are open-ended; most information sought is qualitative; most input is in text format and speculation is encouraged. Published in 2014, the Index has already been employed in many bioarchaeology of care studies.4

Version 2 of the Index of Care, incorporating user feedback and with expanded data collection options, will be available at the end of 2018.


THE INDEX OF CARE: An open-access, cloud application for bioarchaeology of care research
Lorna Tilley and Tony Cameron, Australia

EXEMPLARY EXAMPLES: Man Bac Burial 9

HUMAN remains are the raw material for bioarchaeological research. However, if we want to draw conclusions about the health and well-being of people who lived in the past, we need a framework to guide our understanding of the human remains we see. For example, the bioarchaeology of care framework provides a window into understanding aspects of community lifeways and can help us to interpret early childhood trauma, disease, and the provision to a seriously disabled individual.

The Nature of Nursing.

For example, if we look at the skeletal remains of a prehistoric human, we might see evidence of disease or injury that suggests the person was disabled. But how do we interpret that evidence? What kind of care was provided? What kind of accommodation was made? These are questions that can be addressed using the bioarchaeology of care framework.

We have gathered the templates, tools, and resources to assist you in your bioarchaeology of care research.

Step 1: Describe, diagnose, document

We have developed a template to assist you in describing, diagnosing, and documenting the human remains you are studying. This template includes fields for recording information about the individual, the context in which they lived, and the evidence of disease or injury that you see. By filling out this template, you can begin to build a picture of the person you are studying.

Step 2: Construct a model of care

Once you have described, diagnosed, and documented the human remains, you can move on to constructing a model of care. We have developed a template to assist you in doing this. This template includes fields for recording information about the care that was provided, the accommodation that was made, and the effects of the care and accommodation on the person.

Step 3: Interpret implications of care

After constructing a model of care, you can move on to interpreting the implications of that care. We have developed a template to assist you in doing this. This template includes fields for recording information about the implications of the care and accommodation, and the effects of the care and accommodation on the person.

Step 4: Final task

Finally, you can consider the broader implications of your research. We have developed a template to assist you in doing this. This template includes fields for recording information about the broader implications of your research, and the implications of your research for future research.

A FINAL WORD...

The Index of Care does not contain a formula for analysing disability and care - it does not pretend to generate ‘answers’. Just as every individual’s experience of disease is unique, so is every case study of their care; if answers are available, it is up to the researcher to find them. The Index is a tool to help in this process. There are no restrictions imposed on its application; researchers may choose to use some steps or worksheets but not others, or may simply use worksheets to remind themselves of issues worth considering. The Index of Care is an open-access, cloud application for bioarchaeology of care research. The Nature of Nursing.

REFERENCES


EXAMPLE 2: Romito 2

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