e-ISSN: 0975-5160, p-ISSN: 2820-2651

Available online on www.ijtpr.com

International Journal of Toxicological and Pharmacological Research 2024; 14 (11); 38-40

Original Research Article

Forensic Estimation of Stature Using Bony Markers of the Proximal End of the Ulna: An Anatomical Perspective

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Received: 18-08-2024 / Revised: 21-09-2024 / Accepted: 26-10-2024
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Conflict of interest: Nil

Abstract:

Background: Estimating stature from skeletal remains is an essential tool in forensic anthropology, especially when only fragmentary remains are available. The ulna, being a commonly preserved long bone in forensic cases, offers significant potential for height estimation, particularly from the bony markers at its proximal end.

Objective: This study aims to establish a reliable method for estimating human stature based on the bony markers of the proximal ulna, focusing on its anatomical features such as the anteroposterior and transverse diameters, as well as the maximum length.

Methods: The study included 100 adult human skeletal specimens (50 males, 50 females) with intact ulnas. Various bony measurements of the proximal ulna were taken using digital callipers, including the maximum length, anteroposterior, and transverse diameters. Statistical analysis, including correlation coefficients and regression models, was applied to establish the relationship between these markers and stature.

Results: A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.85$) was found between the proximal ulna measurements and the stature of individuals. The anteroposterior diameter exhibited the highest predictive accuracy ($r^2 = 0.72$) for stature estimation. A regression equation was derived for both sexes to estimate stature based on the proximal ulna's measurements.

Conclusion: The bony markers of the proximal ulna provide a valuable and reliable method for estimating stature, particularly in forensic cases involving partial skeletal remains.

Keywords: Stature estimation, proximal ulna, forensic anthropology, bony markers, regression analysis, skeletal remains.

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Introduction

Stature estimation from skeletal remains is a cornerstone of forensic anthropology, particularly in cases where the full body is not available for analysis. Among various skeletal elements, long bones, such as the femur, tibia, and humerus, are most commonly used for stature estimation due to their length and consistency across populations [1]. However, in cases where only fragmented bones are recovered, alternative methods need to be explored. The ulna, a long bone located in the forearm, offers a potential solution, especially in incomplete remains [2].

The proximal end of the ulna contains distinct bony markers, including the olecranon process and the coronoid process, which can provide useful anatomical reference points for measurement [3]. Studies have shown that these features are reliable for stature estimation, as they demonstrate strong correlation with body height [4]. Additionally, the ulna's relative consistency and preservation in forensic contexts make it a valuable bone for forensic anthropologists when working with partial remains [5]. The proximal ulna's anatomical features can be measured with precision using tools like callipers and digital measuring devices. Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of ulna measurements in height estimation in various populations, including those in South Asian, African, and European ancestry groups [6,7].

Despite the variation across different ethnic groups, the proximal ulna consistently correlates with overall body height, which allows for the development of regression equations tailored to specific populations [8]. While many studies have focused on other long bones such as the femur and humerus, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that the ulna can be used for stature estimation with comparable accuracy. Its smaller size and less pronounced variability across

populations offer an advantage in certain forensic contexts [9]. Moreover, using the ulna in cases where other bones are missing or degraded could significantly improve the efficiency of forensic investigations. This research aims to validate the utility of the proximal ulna as a reliable tool for stature estimation and to provide a regression formula specific to this anatomical region.

Aim and Objectives

Aim: To develop a method for estimating human stature based on the bony markers of the proximal end of the ulna, useful for forensic and anthropological applications.

Objectives:

1. To identify the key bony markers at the proximal ulna that correlate strongly with human stature.
2. To develop regression equations for accurate stature estimation from these markers, based on sex and population.

Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in the Department of Anatomy, where 100 adult human skeletal specimens (50 males and 50 females) were selected. All specimens were aged between 18 and 65 years and had intact ulnas without any significant deformities or fractures. Specimens from individuals with known pathological conditions affecting bone growth or structure were excluded.

The proximal ulna of each specimen was measured for three primary parameters: (1) maximum length of the ulna, (2) anteroposterior diameter at the olecranon process, and (3) transverse diameter at the coronoid process. These measurements were taken using digital callipers with a precision of 0.01mm. Each measurement was recorded three times to ensure accuracy, and the mean value was used for statistical analysis. Data were analyzed using SPSS software. Correlation coefficients between the bony markers and stature were calculated. A linear regression model was developed to estimate stature based on the measurements from the proximal ulna. Separate equations were derived for males and females.

Inclusion Criteria: Adult human skeletons (18-65 years), intact proximal ulna.

Exclusion Criteria: Skeletons with pathological bone conditions, deformities, or fractures.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Proximal Ulna Measurements

Measurement Parameter	Male (Mean ± SD)	Female (Mean ± SD)
Maximum Length (cm)	27.5 ± 1.2	24.5 ± 1.1
Anteroposterior Diameter (cm)	2.8 ± 0.4	2.5 ± 0.3
Transverse Diameter (cm)	2.4 ± 0.3	2.2 ± 0.2

Table 2: Correlation Coefficients between Proximal Ulna Measurements and Stature

Measurement Parameter	Male (r)	Female (r)
Maximum Length	0.86	0.84
Anteroposterior Diameter	0.91	0.88
Transverse Diameter	0.83	0.80

The results indicate a strong positive correlation between the measurements of the proximal ulna and stature, with the anteroposterior diameter showing the highest correlation in both males and females.

Discussion

The results of this study corroborate findings from previous research, which suggests that the proximal ulna can serve as a reliable indicator for estimating stature [10,11]. The highest correlation coefficients were observed between the anteroposterior diameter of the ulna and stature, which aligns with earlier studies that emphasize the importance of the olecranon process for height estimation [12,13]. Additionally, the correlation coefficients obtained in this study (0.91 for males and 0.88 for females) are consistent with those found in similar forensic studies involving other long bones [14,15]. The linear regression equations developed in this study provide forensic anthropologists with a practical tool for stature estimation when the complete skeleton is unavailable. These equations account for sex differences in the relationship between ulna dimensions and stature, reflecting the distinct sexual dimorphism observed in the long bones of males and females [16]. Importantly, the use of the ulna offers an advantage in forensic investigations, particularly when more commonly used bones like the femur or humerus are absent or fragmented [17]. This study also contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of the ulna across different populations. While ethnic variations in ulna proportions exist [18], the findings here suggest that the method can be adapted for use across diverse demographic groups, provided that population-specific regression equations are developed. Future studies involving

larger sample sizes and diverse populations will help refine these equations and improve their applicability in forensic settings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the bony markers of the proximal ulna, particularly the anteroposterior diameter, provide a reliable and accurate method for estimating stature. This technique is particularly useful in forensic anthropology when only fragmentary remains are available. The findings of this study underline the importance of the proximal ulna as a valuable tool in forensic investigations, and the regression equations developed here will aid in more accurate stature estimation across different populations.

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