

Sheer Lunacy

A good portion of behavioral health professionals believe the full moon affects patient behaviors.¹ On the whole, the literature refutes the existence of a lunar effect on patient behavior.²

Mental Health Outcomes investigated possible correlations between the lunar phases and seclusion and restraint usage by analyzing the HBIPS data set comprising information from 143 hospitals (607,863 patients) over two years. Seclusion and Restraint data serve as an excellent marker for aberrant negative behavior, and the HBIPS measures capture 100% of this data for reporting facilities.

The data indicates that across moon phases³ there is:

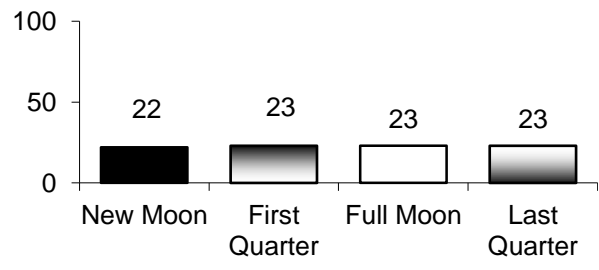
- No difference in number of seclusions
- No difference in time spent in seclusion
- No difference in number of restraints
- No difference in time spent in restraint

Ascribing patient behavior to the moon robs behavioral medicine of credibility, increases the “mysticism” and stigma surrounding our patients, and leaves us powerless to create change. If we’re to remove the stigma associated with mental illness, we’ll need to start within our own ranks and admit that we may have some lunacy of our own that needs to be dealt with.

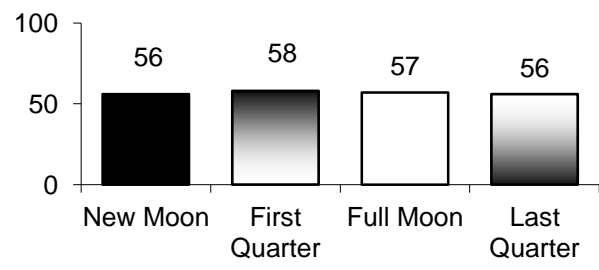
~ Johan Smith, VP Health Informatics



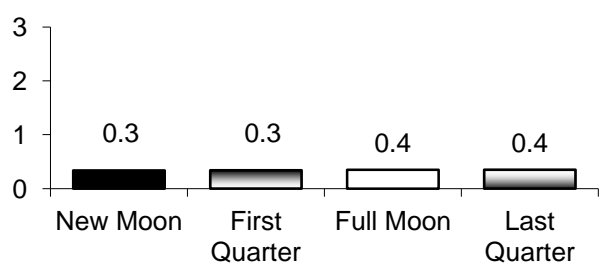
Average Minutes Restrained



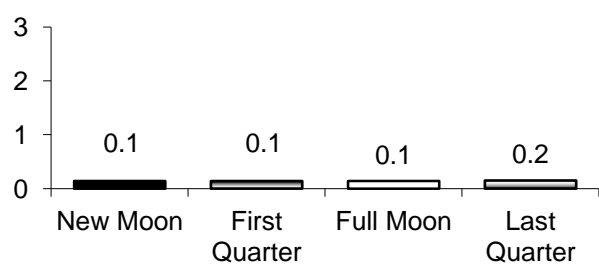
Average Minutes Secluded



Average Number of Daily Restraints



Average Number of Daily Seclusions



¹ Angus, M.D. (1995) The rejection of two explanations of belief in a lunar influence on behavior. In D.E. Vance, Editor, *Belief in lunar effects on human behavior psychological reports* 76 (1995), p.32 Unpublished masters thesis, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada.

² <http://skepdic.com/fullmoon.html>

³ Moon phases shown are five day ranges, with the middle day being the peak of the event.