

Mike Pearson, CAT Block 6

Kamat, S. et al. Pediatric Psychiatric Emergency Department Visits During a Full Moon. *Pediatric Emergency Care*. 2014; 30:875-878

Background: The authors note that psychiatric visits to pediatric emergency rooms have disproportionately increased during the past decades compared to medical visits. Moreover, these patients are more likely to come by ambulance, be admitted and spend longer time in the ED. Swells in pediatric psych ED visits during the school year and during mid-week and even in the latter portion of the day have been documented, and the authors postulated that there may also be a correlation between the lunar cycle and acute psychiatric decompensation.

Methods: This is a retrospective cohort study conducted by the authors at a single center in Miami, FL. All patients presenting with a psychiatric complaint during a 3 year period were included. Diagnoses included SI or attempted suicide, anorexia nervosa, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, agitation, hallucinations, PTSD, panic and behavioral complaints, as well as medical clearance. They compared patients presenting in the 3 days surrounding the full moon to those presenting 1 week from the full moon such that the 3 day period had the same corresponding days of the week. Total visits during the “full-moon” effect and the control period were tallied as well as basic demographics about the encounter.

Results: >500 patients were included, ½ male and ½ female. Total patients seen on Mondays were twice and three times the volumes seen on Saturdays and Sundays, respectively. Big surprise: teenagers were the most common age group. About two thirds of patients were admitted. Two thirds were seen between 6 AM and 6 PM. SI and medical clearance were the most common reason to be seen. The authors found no statistical difference between total psych visits during full moon periods and non-full moon days or during the full moon periods. Even for the teenagers.

Limitations: This is a study from a single center in Miami—culturally, whether the patients are more or less influenced by the lunar cycle compared with more rural areas or other parts of the country (e.g. Appalachia or California) is questionable. The authors also did not investigate or compare visits during the new moon to their controls or full moon; the new moon has well documented gravitational effects on planet Earth commensurate to the full moon. The authors note that they did not account for cloudy days.

Discussion: Nearly half (19 of 39) of works referenced by the authors are studies regarding the effects of the moon on marine and wild life phenomena, mythology and folklore. The remainder are previous studies of psychiatry and trauma which show no correlation between volume and lunar cycle. This study is the first to demonstrate no relationship between the lunar cycle and psychiatric complaints.
