

A LITTLE LUNAR EXPERIMENT

For the whole of 2001 I kept a diary in which I logged the initials of every patient who phoned for help. At the end of the year I added the dates of new and full moons. I wanted to know whether the fabled lunar aggravations really did occur in my patients.

The experiment took place over 12 new moons and 13 full moons. Unfortunately 6 new moons and 3 full moons occurred over weekends, bank holidays or my holidays so only 16 out of 25 possible moons have associated patients' calls.

The year produced 526 calls for help which averages 11.4 for each week that I was available. To assess the "worse before full/new moon" phenomenon I have counted the number of calls in the 36 hours (rather than 24) before the moon phase. The 526 annual calls give an average of about 4.5 in every 36 hour period.

There were some understandable peaks: 9 calls after September 11th, also 9 calls around the full moon of 9th January which was also a lunar eclipse, and 12 calls around the full moon of 8th February, 7 of which came from a very unwell patient who definitely has lunar aggravations. Less explicable were 10 calls on 2nd April but a possible factor could be a lot of sunspot activity that day.

These are the results:

Of the 7 new moons (for which I have results) an average of 4 calls were received in the 36 hours before it (i.e. below the average of 4.5).

Of the 9 full moons an average of 7 calls were received - about 50% more than usual.

Conclusion:

Next time you think you will go crazy if your phone keeps ringing, be reassured, it will all settle down again when the moon begins to wane.

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