Reviewer’s report

Title: Are patient falls in the hospital associated with lunar cycles? A retrospective observational study

Version: 1 Date: 6 September 2005

Reviewer: Nicky hayes

Reviewer’s report:

General
In general, this is a very interesting and well written paper.

The rationale for the study is based on an area of perceived health care professional superstition, that falls amongst hospital patients might correlate with the lunar cycle.

The literature review is thoroughly carried out, with reference to a range of appropriate papers. This includes up to date studies on falls risk assessment as well as the available literature on patient behaviours and conditions and their association with the lunar cycle.

The method is clearly explained, and results succinctly presented.

The discussion has addressed the evidence for multifactorial etiology of falls although the authors have not specifically acknowledged the relative lack of evidence for hospital-based falls risk assessment and interventions.

Whilst the anecdotal nature of the evidence that triggered the study is acknowledged, the authors have not further reviewed the literature to support their assertion that health care professionals believe in associations between the lunar cycle and falls. Superstitions, attitudes and beliefs are relevant to health care professionals behaviours, and it is likely that there is a broader literature on this, which would be relevant to the hypothesis. This has not been examined. Furthermore, whilst this is article has found that falls do not correlate with the lunar cycle in the study population, it has not related this to beliefs of health professionals within the same setting.

In the process of building evidence for falls risk assessment and prevention in acute settings, this study certainly points the way towards further analysis of underpinning cultural and belief factors. It provides objective evidence of falls events that supports the findings of previous studies that phenomena are unrelated to the phases of the moon.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Evidence of beliefs of health professionals regarding falls and phases of the moon in the study setting or within the general literature

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests