




Make a Wish!

By Neil Sunday

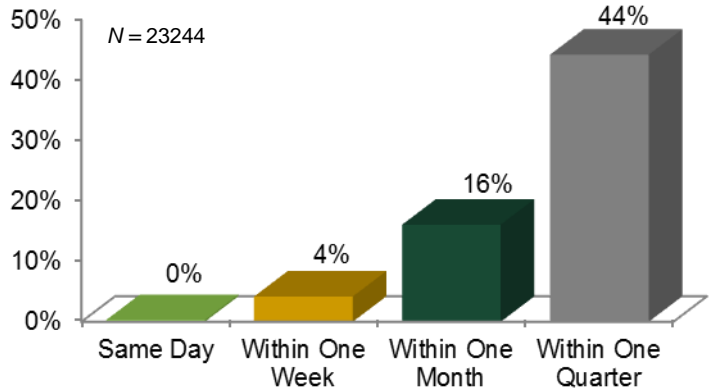
Do you often find yourself in a party hat, serving up birthday cake to your patients? The question, “Why are so many patients admitted close to their birthday?” was posed to Mental Health Outcomes. The answer is simple: *They aren’t*. It only seems to be the case because of something known as an availability heuristic.¹

An availability heuristic is a mental shortcut that relies on immediate examples that come to mind. Since a slice of cake and creamy frosting is far more memorable than a routine Tuesday afternoon, it stands out in your mind-inviting your subconscious to assign it greater prevalence than it truly rates.

Take a moment to consider: Are there other, higher impact availability heuristics that might affect patient care? Do you find yourself constructing treatment paths based on a gut feel instead of data? CQI+ provides a myriad of tools to assist you with data driven decision making. Put us to good use helping you help your patients.

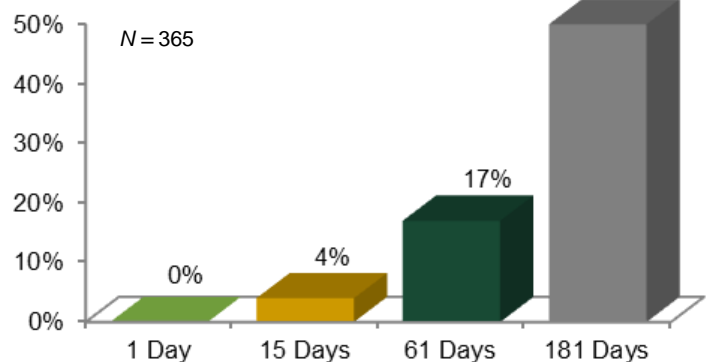
And please, save us a piece of cake! 

Percentage of Patients Admitted Near Day of Birth



Presented above is the percentage of patients whose admission date fell within a given time period from their day of birth. If admission dates were frequently close to birthdates we would expect the graph to exhibit higher percentages for each range than those from an even distribution of admissions and birthdays (seen below). The similarity of the graphs illustrate that there is not a relationship between birthdates and admission dates.²

Day Ranges, Percent of a Year



¹Amos Tversky; Daniel Kahneman: Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases. *Science*, New Series, Vol. 185, No. 4157. (Sep. 27, 1974), pp. 1124-1131

² Data includes Geriatric Inpatients from January 2013 through December 2014.