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## Two notes on certain relationships among triangular numbers

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We became interested as to what cubes of positive integers could be expressed as the difference of integer squares. A familiar algebraic maneuver came to mind. Suppose that  $x^3 = a^2 - b^2$  and  $y^3 = c^2 - d^2$ . Then  $(xy)^3 = x^3y^3 = (a^2 - b^2)(c^2 - d^2) = a^2c^2 - a^2d^2 - b^2c^2 + b^2d^2$ , and so

 $(xy)^3 = a^2c^2 + 2abcd + b^2d^2 - a^2d^2 - 2abcd - b^2c^2 = (ac+bd)^2 - (ad+bc)^2$ . This mechanism provides a way to generate infinitely many cubes of positive integers as such a difference, perhaps necessitating the use of absolute values applied to the last expression. As a matter of fact, it is clear that nth powers may replace the cubes above. However, sticking to cubes will pay a dividend. Consider these particular examples without reading beyond them:

$$3^{2} - 1^{2} = 8$$
  

$$6^{2} - 3^{2} = 27$$
  

$$10^{2} - 6^{2} = 64$$
  

$$15^{2} - 10^{2} = 125$$

I hope the reader had the thrill of discovering that the squares used are the squares of consecutive *triangular numbers*. Recall that these numbers form the sequence 1, 3, 6, 10, 15, 21, ..., with general term  $t_n = \frac{n(n+1)}{2}$ ,  $\forall n \ge 1$ . This immediately suggests that  $t_n^2 - t_{n-1}^2 = n^3$ ,  $\forall n \ge 2$ , a fact that is easily verified algebraically.

We also observed that

$$1^{2} + 3^{2} = 10 = T_{4}$$

$$3^{2} + 6^{2} = 45 = T_{9}$$

$$6^{2} + 10^{2} = 136 = T_{16}$$

$$10^{2} + 15^{2} = 325 = T_{25}$$

suggesting that  $T_n^2 + T_{n+1}^2 = T_{T_n + T_{n+1}}$ ,  $n \ge 1$ , and this pleasant fact is easily verified algebraically.

Also, we can show that there are infinitely many triangular numbers satisfying  $T_a + T_b = T_c^2$ .

The computations

$$T_{2} + T_{3} = 3 + 6 = 9 = T_{2}^{2}$$
  

$$T_{5} + T_{6} = 15 + 21 = 36 = T_{3}^{2}$$
  

$$T_{9} + T_{10} = 45 + 55 = 100 = T_{4}^{2}$$
  

$$T_{14} + T_{15} = 105 + 120 = 225 = T_{5}^{2}$$

suggest that  $T_{T_n-1}+T_{T_n}={T_n}^2, n\geq 2$  , again verifiable algebraically.