

10. (a) The distance between any of the spheres at the corners and the sphere at the center is $r = \ell/2 \cos 30^\circ = \ell/\sqrt{3}$ where ℓ is the length of one side of the equilateral triangle. The net (downward) contribution caused by the two bottom-most spheres (each of mass m) to the total force on m_4 has magnitude

$$2F_y = 2 \left(\frac{Gm_4m}{r^2} \right) \sin 30^\circ = 3 \frac{Gm_4m}{\ell^2} .$$

This must equal the magnitude of the pull from M , so

$$3 \frac{Gm_4m}{\ell^2} = \frac{Gm_4M}{(\ell/\sqrt{3})^2}$$

which readily yields $m = M$.

- (b) Since m_4 cancels in that last step, then the amount of mass in the center sphere is not relevant to the problem. The net force is still zero.