

Weekend NHS

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Sir, Susan Murray (letter, Feb 26) perpetuates the myth that inflexible consultants are the only bar to a full NHS weekend service. On the contrary, the proportion of consultants working at the weekend is broadly the same as the proportion of junior doctors, paramedical professionals and porters, and significantly higher than the figure for administrative staff and managers. To run outpatient clinics and elective surgery sessions at the weekend would require more staff in all categories, and would be prohibitively expensive, at a time when we are being told to cut £20 billion from the NHS budget. She rightly states that patients cannot choose to fall ill or have accidents on weekdays only, but that is irrelevant to her argument, because emergency treatment is already available out of hours; it is non-urgent treatment at weekends that is the issue.

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