

Weekend surgery 'has no impact on death risk'

BY JANICE BURNS

UNDERGOING emergency surgery at the weekend has no impact on a patient's survival chances, a study has found.

The finding from a study of thousands of emergency operations in Scotland is in sharp contrast to previous results showing a greater risk of dying after weekend elective surgery.

The "weekend effect" that is said to make surgery on Saturday or Sunday riskier has been blamed on a lack of skilled senior staff but the research suggests that such problems do not apply to emergency situations when a patient's life may hang in the balance.

Lead scientist Dr Michael Gillies, from the University of Edinburgh, said: "Emergency surgery is associated with far greater risks than elective surgery so it is reassuring to find that patients in Scotland are receiving the same high standards of care throughout the week."

More than a third of all surgical procedures in the UK are classified as emergencies.

People having emergency surgery are eight times more likely to die than elective patients due to the greater risk of complications.

The researchers looked at more than 50,000 emergency surgery cases in Scotland over a three-year period between 2005 and 2007.

Tracking the progress of patients over a period of five years showed that weekend operations had no effect on short or long-term survival.

Emergency patients admitted to hospital over a weekend were less likely to experience delays before surgery. The study is reported in the British Journal of Surgery.

