



The Right Honourable Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health
Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

20 October 2015

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to register my concern about the way in which you have publicly misrepresented an academic article published in The BMJ.

The article, by Freemantle et al, reports an analysis of 30 day mortality after admission to hospital and finds a statistical excess of deaths in patients admitted at weekends. What it does not do is apportion any cause for that excess, nor does it take a view on what proportion of those deaths might be avoidable. Despite the authors' very clear statements to this effect in the paper and elsewhere, you have repeatedly told MPs and the public via media interviews that these deaths are due to poor staffing at weekends, with a particular emphasis on medical staffing. This clearly implies that you believe these excess deaths are avoidable.

I ask you to publicly clarify the statements you have made in relation to this article to show that you fully understand the issues involved. We all want the very best health service for patients and the public. Misusing data to mislead the public is not the way to achieve this.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Godlee
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