



## Death on the Weekend

About 3 years ago, Dr. Perri Klass, a well-known pediatrician and Professor of Journalism and Pediatrics at New York University, gave a talk with her mother, Sheila Solomon Klass, on their book: *"Every Mother Is a Daughter: the Neverending Quest for Success, Inner Peace, and a Really Clean Kitchen."* The dynamic between Perri Klass and her mother mesmerized more than 300 in the audience that Sunday.

I didn't think about Dr. Klass again until I read her moving and frightening article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in January of this year, *"Death Takes a Weekend,"*<sup>1</sup> contrasting her viewpoint of the hospital on the weekends during her residency with her more recent encounter during her mother's last and final stay in a hospital.

### **The Statistics Are Clear**

You don't want to have a heart attack or stroke on the weekend,<sup>2,3</sup> and you don't want your child to have an emergency appendectomy on the weekend.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Klass describes how she developed her own version of weekend effect during this hospital stay. *"I would start feeling tense every Thursday afternoon, every Friday morning, staving off panic by displaying a slightly*

*frenetic need to get consults done, problems reassessed, orders written [for her mother].” After all, she says, “When you’re sick and scared, Sunday is the same as Tuesday.”*

**Sunday**  
*Monday*  
*Tuesday*  
*Wednesday*  
*Thursday*  
*Friday*  
**Saturday**

Although the Libby Zion case<sup>5</sup> changed many procedures in the hospital, in some ways, it is no different than numerous other services, where the youngest, most inexperienced staff work on the weekends. *“I’ll have to ask the manager, who will be in on Monday.”<sup>1</sup>*



## **What Can Pharma Do?**

We understand the intensity and pressures of providing comprehensive and cost-effective services on the healthcare provider side, but we don’t work there. We work on the drug/device/diagnostic supply side.

During my last hospital visit, I was amazed at how little has changed and how labor intensive the acute care setting remains. Any efficiencies emerging over the last few years have been overcome by more tests taken, more details sought, more regulations driving procedures, and more time needed to comply.

What can we do, from our positions on the drug/device/supply side, if anything, to change this “weekend effect”?

1. Klass P. Death takes a weekend. *N Engl J Med*. 2015;372(5):402-5. 2. Bell CM, Redelmeier DA. Mortality among patients admitted to hospitals on weekends as compared with weekdays. *N Engl J Med*. 2001;345:663-668. 3. Peberdy MA, Ornato JP, Larkin GL, et al. Survival from in-hospital cardiac arrest during nights and weekends. *JAMA* 2008;299:785-792. 4. Goldstein SD, Papandria DJ, Aboagye J, et al. The “weekend effect” in pediatric surgery—increased mortality for children undergoing urgent surgery during the weekend. *J Pediatr Surg*. 2014;49:1087-91. 5. Lerner, B. A life-changing case for doctors in training, *The New York Times*. March 3, 2009. [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/03/health/03zion.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/03/health/03zion.html?_r=0).

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*Debbi Hlick*  
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