

Blood vessel-clearing procedure riskier on weekends: study

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(HealthDay)—Although you often don't have a choice of when you get

the heart procedure called percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI), new research suggests that having it done over the weekend may be more risky.

The study reported that people hospitalized on the weekend for PCI were twice as likely to die as those hospitalized on weekdays.

PCI—also known as angioplasty—is a procedure that opens narrowed or blocked [blood vessels](#) using a thin tube (catheter). The tube is placed into a [blood](#) vessel (usually at the top of the thigh) and carefully guided to the heart. If necessary, a balloon is inflated to open the narrowed or blocked artery. And, a mesh or metal tube called a stent may be left in place to keep the blood vessel open, according to the U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

The new study included information from nearly 1.3 million PCI procedures done in the United States. The PCIs were done between 2004 and 2013.

Weekend hospital admissions numbered about 12 percent in 2004. By 2013, that number was 21.5 percent, the study found.

Death rates were around 2 percent for [patients](#) admitted on weekends and about 1 percent for those admitted on weekdays, the research revealed.

Patients admitted on weekends also had longer hospital stays (about four days versus three days). Weekend PCIs were also linked to a higher cost of care (nearly \$24,000 versus \$20,000).

The study was scheduled for presentation Thursday at a Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions meeting in New Orleans. Findings presented at meetings are typically viewed as preliminary until

published in a peer-reviewed journal.

"There is controversy about what is known as 'the weekend effect,'" lead researcher Dr. Byomesh Tripathi said in a society news release. Tripathi is a resident physician at Mount Sinai St. Luke's and Mount Sinai West Hospital in New York City.

The new study group is "highly representative of the U.S.," he said. The study covered almost one in five people who had PCI, making the results statistically significant.

"Our study clearly showed that [weekend](#) admissions for PCI patients are associated with higher in-hospital mortality, though margins are closing in comparison to weekday admissions, and longer lengths of stay," Tripathi said.

"We speculate that better access to care on weekends could improve the outcome for patients undergoing PCI," Tripathi concluded.

More information: The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has more on [percutaneous coronary intervention](#).

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