

MPs dispute case for 7-day NHS amid funding fears

By **Laura Donnelly** HEALTH EDITOR

GOVERNMENT plans for a seven-day NHS are based on “flimsy notions”, the public accounts committee (PAC) has said, amid warnings that policies have never been costed.

MPs called for an urgent review of clinical staffing levels, saying it “beggars belief” that “no coherent attempt” had been made to see how many staff are needed to run services safely.

The British Medical Association (BMA) and government negotiators are locked in talks over a new contract for junior doctors, which ministers say will support a “proper seven-day service.” But the PAC said it was “far from convinced” there was sufficient funding.

Meanwhile, two studies published in the *Lancet* said claims of higher mortality rates among patients admitted at weekends had been “over-simplified”.

Dr Mark Porter, chairman of the BMA council, said: “These academics

are the latest in a long line of health professionals and leading experts to challenge the Government on its misleading use of figures.

“The past week has seen a flurry of studies which confirm what doctors have been saying all along: there is a lack of evidence showing that the ‘weekend effect’ is linked to medical staffing levels.”

An NHS spokesman said: “These latest studies don’t alter the wider issue that sick patients rightly should expect to be seen by a consultant within a few hours, have prompt access to tests and treatments and receive joined-up care, whatever day of the week they fall ill.”

◆ The family of Brian Plant, 51, says he died after “screaming in pain” on the floor for 90 minutes as he awaited treatment at Royal Stoke University Hospital following a suspected heart attack. The hospital said yesterday it was investigating Mr Plant’s care.

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