



PRESS RELEASE

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GOSPORT HOSPITAL INQUEST FAILS TO SATISFY FAMILIES

The inquest verdicts on ten deaths which occurred in the late 1990's at Gosport War Memorial Hospital were announced today but failed to satisfy families involved in the inquests, and many more who have been denied an inquiry into their loved ones' deaths at the hospital. Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA) – the charity for patient safety and justice) has been providing support to some of the families. AvMA Chief Executive, Peter Walsh, said:

“With no disrespect to the jury or the coroner, it is now quite clear that Jack Straw’s refusal to hold a public inquiry was wrong. It was impossible to do justice to all ten deaths in one go and, in any case, there were other deaths at Gosport which should have been looked into as well as the role played by various agencies, including the police investigations which ensued”.

AvMA have made a Freedom of Information request to the coroner for release of the letter from the Ministry of Justice which instructed the coroner to hold inquests into just these ten deaths, rather than agreeing to a public inquiry which many people had asked for.

AvMA has also criticised the system for funding legal representation for families at inquests. The charity used its influence to ensure some legal representation was available to families even if it had to be on a pro bono basis. Only at the very last moment was legal aid granted. Walsh added:

“Legal aid should be made much more accessible for families failed by inquests. If it were not for our efforts and the goodwill of Blake Laphorn solicitors, who are members of AvMA’s Lawyers’ Service, and of barristers from Outer Temple Chambers, it is likely that families would have faced this inquest with no legal representation at all”.

AvMA are also calling for a review of how powerful drugs like diamorphine (‘opioids’), which were used in unusually large amounts at Gosport, are being issued in care settings such as nursing homes today.

ENDS

1 For further information contact Peter Walsh on 0208 688 9555 or Code A
 2 Website: www.avma.org.uk
 3 AvMA is a registered charity no. 299123 and a limited company registered in England No 2239250 and in Scotland SCO39683

