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1 HEALTH Hospital Hampshire	<u>HSA9441</u>	PASATnrc_04/11/02	13:28:54	<u>WIRE</u> 1:34-- 277 PA
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50 MORE FAMILIES CONCERNED OVER TREATMENT AT INQUIRY HOSPITAL

Up to 50 more families have come forward with concerns over the deaths and care of loved ones at a Hampshire hospital subject to a Department of Health probe, it has been revealed.

A meeting held by solicitors acting for bereaved families were told more people had come forward after health managers set up a helpline in connection with the Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

The meeting held by solicitors Alexander Harris, who played a major part in the Harold Shipman inquiry, was attended by representatives of 27 families on Sunday night.

The hospital has already been the subject of an investigation by the Commission for Health Improvement and an ongoing probe by Hampshire Police over the deaths of elderly patients during the 1990s.

A file was sent to the Crown Prosecution Service 18 months ago but no action was taken. The allegations centre on concerns over the use of the painkiller diamorphine.

Detective Chief Superintendent Steve Watts said: "We can confirm that a number of people have come forward following recent media appeals to express concern at the treatment of family members at the hospital."

A spokesman for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Strategic Health Authority confirmed "between 40 and 50 people" had contacted the helpline.

He explained there were a mixture of concerns about the hospital but a number of those people had contacted police with allegations over patient care.

In September, the Government's Chief Medical Officer Sir Liam Donaldson ordered a DoH investigation headed by Professor Richard Baker, who investigated

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Harold Shipman after his conviction.

Professor Baker's audit is not expected to report until next year.

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