

Police investigate hospital deaths



The Department of Health is investigating the hospital

Police are to interview up to 50 families of elderly patients, whose deaths at a Hampshire hospital have raised concern.

The long-running dispute over treatment at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital during the 1990s is currently the centre of an audit commissioned by the Department of Health.

Families believe their relatives died because of over-prescription of sedatives such as diamorphine.

An initial police inquiry took place between 1998 and 2001, but the Crown Prosecution Service decided then there was insufficient evidence to bring a prosecution.

Solicitor Ann Alexander, who is representing the families of 24 people who died at the hospital, met senior officers from Hampshire police on Wednesday.

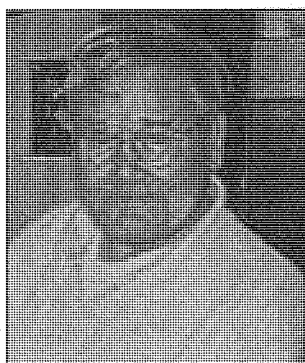
Ms Alexander represented over 200 relatives in the Harold Shipman case.

In a statement she said: "If there is a pattern to these tragic unexpected deaths, it seems that the police should examine as many cases as they can.

"I feel completely reassured that the police are going to do anything they can to get to the bottom of what has happened.

"I hope this is of some comfort for our clients who expressed concerns at Sunday night's meeting that, after their previous complaints to the police, they have felt ignored or fobbed off."

A Hampshire police spokesman said on Thursday: "A number of people have come forward to express concern at the treatment of family members at the hospital.



Robert Wilson died at the hospital in 1998

"We want a full police investigation - at the end of the day we want to get to the



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"Hampshire police are still keen to hear from anyone who has information."

truth of this

**Iain Wilson,
bereaved son**

The Department of Health's chief medical officer called for the inquiry in September.

Professor Richard Baker - who also worked on the Shipman inquiry - was brought in to examine trends and patterns in the hospital's death rates.

Other complaints

In the same month, two former chief executives who managed the hospital at the time of the deaths were given other duties.

It followed the discovery that documents existed in 1991 that expressed concern over drug administration.

Dr Jane Barton, who was responsible for the care of some elderly patients until, has been referred to the General Medical Council.



Eva Page: her son has studied her medical notes

Other staff are also the subject of complaints.

There is no suggestion Dr Barton or the other staff who worked at the hospital deliberately harmed patients.

Iain Wilson's father, Robert, died at the hospital in 1998.

He told BBC News Online: "We want a full police investigation. At the end of the day we want to get to the truth of this."

'Excessive doses'

"I believe excessive doses of diamorphine not only contributed to my father's death but caused his death."

Barney Page was among those who gave police a statement telling them about his mother Eva's death in 1998.

He said: "On arrival at the Gosport Memorial Hospital from the Queen Alexandra, she was immediately given morphine."

Concern expressed

"She remained under its effect until she died four days later, having been under their care for only four days."

Both cases formed part of the initial police investigation,

after which the CPS decided no case should be brought.

The new Department of Health inquiry was triggered after concerns over prescribing practices were raised in a report from the Commission for Health Improvement - the government's health watchdog.