

Post-INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY comment dated 28 June 2009-06-28

Inappropriate use of painkillers - GWMH

 **valdan70** wrote:

Sunday, 28 June 2009 at 09:38 am (UTC)

I was the Patient Affairs Officer at GWMH during part of the period post 1994 when this situation was ongoing. Part of my job was to return personal effects, help with funeral arrangements and pass death certificates to the families of the bereaved. I was concerned about the number of deaths occurring, particularly when on one afternoon alone (I worked 15 hours a week, from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. Monday to Friday) the next of kin of 8 separate patients, who had passed away during the previous night, were waiting to see me. The cause of death on most of the death certificates was given as Pneumonia. I mentioned my concerns to several members of staff, and my manager, especially as I had been present on the wards when patients had been distressed and frightened about being prescribed painkillers administered via a driver. Some were frightened to go to sleep; they were afraid they would not wake up. I was always told I shouldn't involve myself in medical matters as it was none of my business. I have never been asked to give evidence at the inquests, or any of the enquiries. Eventually I resigned my post as I was unable to give the level of help necessary to the bereaved families in the 15 hours allocated to the post. In addition to counselling the bereaved, I arranged and attended funerals/cremations of those patients who had no family, and liaised with the Treasury Solicitor with regard to their affairs. I was also responsible for the patients' expenses and pensions, and the maintenance and auditing of the petty cash and other budgets on a weekly basis. The hospital's budgets were so tight, there was not enough money to fund the post in order to offer even a basic service.