

tehall interest HEALTH ministers are keeping a close eye on the unfolding drama at the Gosport War Memo-

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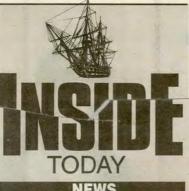
But senior sources have revealed that the case is being monitored at the highest levels of the department.

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HOSPITAL INVESTIGATION: Alleged unlawful killing examined by ministers



under microscope

by Brian Brady The News

HEALTH ministers are keeping a close eye on the unfolding drama at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital, it emerged today.

Department Health is refusing to comment officially on an investigation into the alleged unlawful killing of an elderly patient at the hospital until the Crown Prosecution Service has completed its find-

But senior sources disclosed the case is being tracked at the highest levels - and has already been brought to the attention of health secretary Alan Milburn's office.

The News revealed yesterday that the case centres on care the 91-year-old



Peter Viggers

GOSPORT MP Peter Viggers has passed papers on the case to his Eastbourne colleague Nigel Waterson.

The file had been given to Mr Viggers by Gillian Mackenzie, the daughter of the 91-year-old who is at the centre of the death probe.

But he has passed them on to Mrs

Mackenzie's constituency MP, saying that he was satisfied that it was being properly handled by the police and by the Portsmouth HealthCare (NHS)

'I would only become involved if there was a breakdown of the normal authorities,' said Mr Viggers.

woman received at the hospital days before she died there in August 1998. The police investigation was launched after a complaint by her family

DoH officials are keen to comments which avoid could be seen as prejudicing the probe.

But a source told *The News*: 'The department is keeping a very tight watching brief on this, to see the outcome of the CPS investigation.

'If action needs to be taken as a result of the investigation they will not hesitate to do that.'

Detectives working on the inquiry have interviewed a number of medical personnel at the hospital. They say no-one was arrested or questioned under

Lawyers are now deciding whether there is sufficient evidence to pursue a prosecution for alleged unlawful killing.

If the go-ahead is given the deaths of as many as 600 elderly people could be re-examined.

A spokesman for Mr Milburn insisted that the investigation had to be allowed to run its course.

He said: 'This case is being investigated by the CPS so there is nothing further we can say about it at this

'Once they have told us what they intend to do, we will be able to say more."