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PROBE: Daughter criticises health watchdog investigation

My anger at inquiry into care of OAPs

by **Chris Owen**
Chief reporter

A WOMAN at the centre of a probe into the care of elderly patients at a hospital has criticised the health watchdog carrying out the investigation.

Gillian Mackenzie was furious that she was not allowed to hand over documents to investigators from the Commission for Health Improvement.

They interviewed her for several hours at their London headquarters about the death of her mother, Gladys Richards, at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

Mrs Richards, who was 91, died at the War Memorial in August 1998.

She had been sent there to recuperate after a successful hip replacement operation at the Royal Hospital Haslar.

Mrs Mackenzie, 68, was not happy with the treatment her mother received, particularly the amount of drugs she was given.

Since then she has waged a crusade to discover whether that treatment hastened her death.

Mrs Richards's death was investigated by the police when they were alerted by Mrs Mackenzie and hospital staff were interviewed.

But the Crown Prosecution Service decided that there was not enough evidence to prosecute any staff at the War Memorial.

But the police did alert the Commission for Health Improvement, an independent watchdog set up by the government to suggest ways in which hospitals could perform better.

It launched its own inquiry last month which is expected to continue for six months.

Mrs Mackenzie, from East Sussex, was called to give evidence.

She wanted to present a sheaf of documents which included her police statement

Gladys Richards, right, died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in 1988. Now her daughter has criticised a probe into elderly patient care there



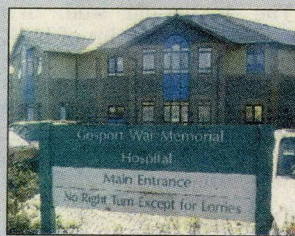
Trust apologised about treatment

HEALTH bosses have apologised to Gladys Richards's family for the way she was treated at the War Memorial Hospital.

Bosses at Portsmouth NHS HealthCare Trust acknowledged there had been a delay in establishing that the 91-year-old had dislocated her new hip when she arrived at the hospital.

They said it was unfortunate that there had also been a delay in x-raying her.

But they insisted that she was not well enough for



Gosport War Memorial Hospital

further surgery under general anaesthetic and that the only realistic option was to keep her pain-free until death.

and bundles of medical notes from both Haslar and the War Memorial hospitals.

She said: 'I'm furious. I had assumed that this was to be a thorough investigation, but they were not interested in looking at the documents and refused to take them.'

'It seems a funny way to conduct an investigation to

me.' But a spokeswoman for the Commission said: 'Our terms of reference do not allow us to receive documents like this from a witness.'

'We will be asking to see all relevant documents such as these later in the inquiry.'

'We're sorry that Mrs Mackenzie is not happy and if she contacts us again we will put her mind at rest.'

Spreading festive cheer to toddlers

A COMMUNITY rallied round to make sure toddlers enjoyed a Christmas full of fun.

Parents involved in the Sure Start scheme, which makes sure children under four in the Rowner area of

Gosport have the best start in life, put on a festive party.

They made food, blew up balloons and organised party games, much to the delight of the toddlers at the Crossley Community Centre in Grange

Lane. And the fun continued as three more Christmas parties were organised for more than 100 toddlers.

Sure Start project manager Barbara Higgins said: 'The parents did a brilliant job.'