

Tuesday, July 2, 2002

**the boss, he  
and his wife**

20

**ones collide in mid**



## Backing for hospital

STAFF and patients have rallied to support Gosport's under-fire War Memorial Hospital on the eve of a report into complaints about the treatment of terminally ill patients there.

**FULL STORY** ● Pages 8-9

## Ece Alkaner

### SOMETHING TO SAY



Our new Tuesday columnist graduated from Portsmouth University last summer and now works as an administrator at a recruitment consultancy in the city. Her name, which is Turkish, is pronounced 'edger', to rhyme with 'ledger'.

## Inevitable coming of age

**W**ell, it's finally happened. My mum told me about it, a few friends warned me about it and my boyfriend stood back and gleefully waited in anticipation for it.

It took a while as I tried to reject it, deny it, but now I'm ready to wave my white flag and surrender. I'm not 18 anymore, and I've been forced to admit it.

It's true. My birth certificate states that I was born in 1980 and so, 24 hours after the night before, I'm still hung over. I'm sweating, my stomach is doing somersaults, there isn't enough water in the world, my breath is just pure evil - and it's all because I'm not 18.

How can I feel so bad after a night of feeling so good? But more importantly, why is it now taking so long for the pain to stop? I spend enough money on supplements, vitamins and minerals (supposedly another symptom of my new-found maturity) to feel a lot better than this. As much as it saddens me, the blatant truth is that after too many years of misuse my body can't play the tricks it used to.

We had massive fun last night in the pubs and club, downing the shots and talking the talk, but we did linger briefly on the fact that we'd be hung-over for work the next day. How rock 'n' roll is that?

And let me tell you about a few other 'issues' in the life of a 22-year-old - like the dilemma of wanting to buy clothes that your younger sister would be proud of, debating the effectiveness of a £30 fine-line cream, wondering why those 18-year-olds look so damn young now days and discovering you prefer red wine to a pint of lager. I sound like my mum. What has become of us?

I guess I've just got to get on with it. Anyway, there's always next Saturday and in the meantime I suppose I'd better look into those pension schemes I was referred to at work.

## By any means necessary

**T**o use my breasts to my advantage or not to use my breasts to my advantage? This is the question.

I've always thought women who consciously use their femininity to their advantage are weak and corrupt. Why not use intelligence, integrity and initiative?

I was in a busy pub the other night and had to gather chairs for friends who were about to arrive. I was answered coldly by women but men, when given the friendly eye and a cheeky grin, were all too quick to offer me chairs from around their tables, regardless of the fact that they were occupied by their mates queuing at the bar. It's as simple as that.

Now who is weaker? Me with my tactic (the 'sugar and spice' facade) or the gormless men? I guess both the men and I fell for the role all too easily.

## It happened today

**1865:** The Salvation Army was originated by William Booth, with a revival meeting at London's Whitechapel.  
**1937:** Amelia Earhart Putnam, American aviator, and co-pilot Fred Noonan were lost near Howland Island in the Pacific during their

attempt to fly round the world.

**1956:** Elvis Presley recorded *Hound Dog* and *Don't Be Cruel* in RCA's New York Studio. The release reached No 1.

**1964:** President Johnson signed the USA Civil Rights Bill, prohibiting racial discrimination.



## TUESDAY'S AGENDA

Fifteen months after allegations arose about the treatment of elderly

# Waiting for

**FIFTEEN** months ago, revelations in *The News* that police were investigating the deaths of former Gosport War Memorial Hospital patients shocked the area. On the eve of a report into the affair being published, **REBECCA ELLINOR** reports on the mood inside the hospital.

**H**ospital service manager Jan Peach looks me in the eye and says: 'At no point do we support a patient being killed. We just don't do it.'

'There's no question of it happening. We care for them, for whatever their needs are.'

Senior staff nurse Pat Wilkins, who has worked on Daedalus ward for the past 17 years, shakes her head in unison with her boss.

She adds: 'There's no question of us being ageist because we look after people over the age of 65 and that's what we've chosen to do.'

In the 79-year history of Gosport's War Memorial Hospital, never has it attracted such attention as when *The News* last year revealed police were investigating complaints from relatives of dead patients.

They accused medical staff of assisting the deaths of their mums and dads, many of whom were treated on Daedalus ward.

Since those allegations were made, staff have been interviewed by police, the health ombudsman (the official NHS watchdog) and more recently a national health organisation called the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI).

The group was called in last year after a further investigation was prompted by relatives and police.

Their report is expected to be made public tomorrow.

Jan says: 'We're not frightened about the CHI report. We've got nothing to hide. We're just waiting for it to come so we can move on.'

But it is anticipated that the long-awaited report may not be enough to satisfy relatives, who have also now lodged complaints about the way police handled cases, and have complained about particular doctors to the General Medical Council.

Gillian Mackenzie, daughter of one of the women who died, has told *The News*: 'I'm not going to stop until I get the answers I deserve.'

'I'm still adamant it should be



Hospital manager Jan Peach walks the wards at Gosport War Memorial Hospital where, she

heard before a judge and jury.'

So far there have been about 12 complaints from relatives of patients treated at the hospital who died following treatment.

Many relatives were concerned about the levels of sedative drugs, such as diamorphine, given to loved ones.

But no action has been taken by the police or Crown Prosecution Service against the hospital or doctors involved.

Staff at the hospital say the group of people who have com-

plained is small compared to the hundreds of letters they get from others - whose relatives have been treated on an elderly care ward at the hospital.

They are satisfied nothing untoward has ever happened, but admit that had new procedures - now in place - existed four or five years ago things could have been different.

'Maybe if things had been in place earlier it may have changed the outcome for those people,' says Jan.

'Possibly some communication about the administering of drugs improved as a result of some relatives feeling it was not as good as it should have been.'

'Diamorphine management is taken very seriously.'

Pat chips in: 'I would want diamorphine for my parents.'

Staff are adamant they listen to the concerns of patients' relatives and held a workshop 18 months ago to look at complaints, including some of those from people who were unhappy

'We get hundreds of compliments compared to the number

patients there, staff at a Gosport hospital are about to hear the result of an inquiry into the matter

# the clouds to lift



## HOSPITAL CHANGES

ONE major change is that Daedalus ward is no longer a continuing care ward, but instead a 24-bed rehabilitation unit for stroke and other patients.

Other changes include: Improved procedures for dealing with emergencies – instead of just dealing with it on a ward-to-ward basis there is now a hospital-wide system, which means better help is made available more quickly.

The use of automated electric shock machines was brought in in 2000. Nurses now have life-support training twice instead of once a year.

Random checks are carried out to test the resuscitation skills of staff.

All wards have machines to monitor heart activity and have a link with the Portsmouth heart unit should they have any concerns about a patient's condition.

A staff-grade doctor is on duty at the hospital between 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, instead of a system of intermittent visits from a patient's GP, which means there is now much more medical support on hand.

In addition, there is now a senior nurse, Toni Scammell, who helps oversee changes and training.

There are plans to look at training staff to give intravenous treatments, including blood transfusions and antibiotics.

There is more education for nurses so they feel confident to challenge doctors about their decision to use pain relief – specifically diamorphine – and the amounts of it.

Staff say the changes were made possible after they were given additional funding two years ago – which helped to increase the number of staff and their training – and not as a direct result of complaints, although they say they do try to learn from them.



Jan Peach

says, the staff have been 'absolute stars' to cope with the pressure of recent years

PICTURES: MARCUS MINGINS (022760-27)

with the treatment their family members received before dying at the hospital.

Jan says: 'We try to be more clear about the use of morphine syringe drivers and explain what we're doing and why we're doing it, than perhaps we did.'

'We're much more open and honest about the prognosis of patients.'

Jan, who has been service manager at the hospital for two years, adds: 'The staff are cheerful and happy. We get hundreds

of compliments compared to the number of complaints – and we take them very seriously.

'The staff have been absolute stars through this, but they've lived through it since 1998, stuck with it and come to work every single day to deliver care to patients – but how much more can they take?'

Linda Baldacchino, a health care support worker who has worked on Daedalus ward for 13 years, says: 'It's been so painful. It's been heart-breaking to read

bad reports. I get very upset when people say it's an awful place. It's a lovely place to work and I would put my mother here any day and be able to go home and know she was being well looked after.'

'I'm very proud to be working here.'

Patients on the ward during our visit support this view.

Phyllis Edwards, 89, from Gosport, was being given rehabilitation after a neck operation in Southampton.

Her sister, Gwyneth Edwards, died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in 1998 after a hip replacement, but she has no concerns about the treatment.

She says: 'My sister was here for four months and it was just as wonderful then as it is now.'

'She died in here but I'm quite certain she died naturally. It was and still is fantastic treatment.'

'When I heard I was coming here I was only too pleased. I felt like I was coming home.'



Senior nurse Pat Wilkins with patients and health care support workers (022760-71)

of complaints – and we take them very seriously'