

HEALTH: Campaigners want to know if high doses of drugs killed loved ones

Bereaved families vow to fight for admission

by **Steve Bone**
The News

RELATIVES of elderly people who died at a Gosport hospital vowed today they would not rest until they get an admission that high doses of drugs killed their loved ones.

They said a watchdog's admission that it had not been able to confirm whether levels of sedative and painkilling drugs had led to their deaths was not good enough.

And they want local health chiefs or police to take the investigation to a satisfactory conclusion and confirm or rule out their suspicions.

On Wednesday the Commission for Health Improvement raised serious concerns over the administering of drugs at the hospital in the late 1990s and said procedures governing care of elderly patients were unsatisfactory.

Gillian Mackenzie, 68, whose complaint over the death of her mother Gladys Richards, 91, from Lee-on-the-Solent, sparked the inquiry, said relatives

Row has hit reputation in eyes of public

SOME staff at the War Memorial Hospital have been upset by adverse comments from the public amid publicity over the deaths, suggesting the saga has severely hit the hospital's reputation.

But Gosport GPs say their impression is that the hospital is still well-regarded in the town and they have not heard of patients refusing to

be admitted to the Anns Hill Road hospital.

Dr Peter Lacey, from the Brockhurst Medical Centre, and Dr Peter Beasley, of the Forton Road Surgery, said they had not had to reassure patients, although Dr Beasley said he had been aware it could be an issue.

Dr Beasley said: 'I hope now a line can be drawn under this.'

felt there was enough evidence to suggest high doses of drugs led to deaths.

Health chiefs deny this, pointing to a police investigation that did not lead to any criminal prosecutions and independent probes by health bodies that also failed to find clinical failures.

But Mrs Mackenzie said: 'CHI's remit was clearly not wide enough. They were not allowed to study documents I and other relatives wanted to show them. If they were not allowed to go that far then someone else should.'

Campaigners hope police will re-investigate deaths after looking into formal complaints they did not investigate them properly initially. But if they do not, relatives insist they will battle on.

Ian Piper, chief executive of the Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust, which now runs the hospital, said CHI did not have the power to look into individual cases and that could be why it could not pinpoint reasons for deaths.

Asked whether someone should be accountable for patient care systems



Gosport's War Memorial Hospital

put in place which were criticised in the CHI report, he said many of the systems were to be found at hospitals across the country.

And he said in the case of locally-devised systems that proved inadequate, the important thing was that these had been changed.

The General Medical Council and Nursing and Midwifery Council are investigating individual doctors and nurses named in some of the complaints and could decide to take disciplinary action.

Men hunted as £1,000 lawnmowers are stolen

by **Emily Twinch**
The News

TWO lawnmowers, together worth £1,000, were stolen from a garage in Soberton shortly after the owner met two suspicious men.

Richard Blackburn was approached by two men in a white Ford Transit van and asked if he wanted any gardening work done.

They said they had already asked the 'lady of the house' but Mr Blackburn's wife was away. Mr Blackburn said no but was suspicious and phoned the police.

About 45 minutes later he found two Honda lawnmowers, worth £300 and £700, missing from his garage.

The driver was in his 30s, white, about 5ft 6in and stocky, with ginger or blond hair and wore casual clothing.

The passenger was white 25, to 30-years-old. The registration of the van was P622 JKW.

The two men struck at about 12.45 pm last Friday.

Information to Fareham police on 0845 0454545.