

**INQUEST:** Doctor says patient, 88, given four times dosage

# Pain patch was far too strong

by Chris Owen  
Chief reporter

A FRAIL woman had four times the recommended dose of painkiller for someone in her condition, an inquest heard.

Elsie Devine, 88, was given a patch containing the drug fentanyl at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

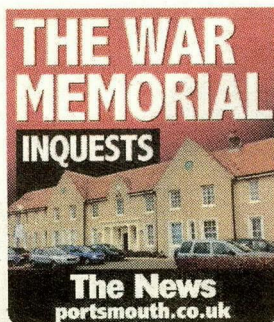
Expert Dr Andrew Wilcock said although the drug was recommended for patients in her condition it would have been delivered better and in a smaller dose by an injection rather than a patch.

Mrs Devine died at the hospital in November 1999 from chronic kidney failure.

Giving evidence on the 14th day of the hearings, which is examining the deaths of 10 patients at the hospital between 1996 and 1999, Dr Wilcock said: 'Fentanyl is considered to be renally clean.

'However, it is recommended to be given subcutaneously (by injection) in small doses in renal care of the dying.'

He said the General Medical Council guidance was that 'excessive doses' should not be given to



Elsie Devine

patients in Mrs Devine's condition.

Dr Wilcock told the jury: 'No justification for the dose was written clearly in her notes.'

Questioned by Tom Leeper, the barrister representing four families of patients who died on Dryad ward at the hospital, Dr Wilcock also confirmed that Mrs Devine was given doses of morphine four times stronger than recommended.

He said: 'Diamorphine and oramorph are probably the worst ones to give someone with renal failure because the kidneys cannot excrete them.'

Mr Leeper asked Dr Wilcock if a sudden deterioration in Mrs Devine's men-

tal state during which she pinned nursing staff against a bookcase, could be caused by the effect of the drugs patch.

The expert replied: 'If someone deteriorates to that extent you need to look for

the probable cause and the patch might have been the cause.

'The conclusion in my report was that, yes, it could be a relevant factor.'

(Proceeding)

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## Dad went downhill after going to War Memorial

Robert Wilson was prescribed strong painkillers, the inquest was told



ONE of the patients who died at Gosport War Memorial was immediately put on a dose of strong painkillers as soon as he arrived there, the inquest heard.

Robert Wilson had broken a shoulder in a fall and was initially treated at Queen Alexandra Hospital, Cosham.

There, he had been on nothing stronger than paracetamol.

But the hearing yesterday heard how as soon as he got to Gosport he was given oramorph – a form of morphine taken in tablet form.

Mr Wilson's son Iain said his father, who lived at Sarisbury Green, had been sitting up in bed and chatting at QA.

But when he saw him for the first time at the War Memorial, his father had gone downhill.

Yesterday, expert Dr Andrew Wilcock said Mr Wilson went into 'a rapid decline'.

'He was treated on a syringe driver (an automatic pump which pushes strong painkillers into the body) and the dosage was increased,' he told the Portsmouth hearing.

Barrister Patrick Sadd, who is representing Mr Wilson's son, said hospital notes described how he was there for 'terminal care' when family members said he had been transferred there for rehabilitation.

Dr Wilcock said: 'The word terminal is very loaded.

'Was he highly likely to die in the next few days?'

'I would have estimated that he was not.'

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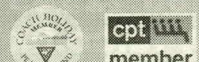


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