

INQUEST: Hearing told elderly woman died three days after arrival at hospital

Daughter's surprise at mother's decline

by Chris Owen
Chief reporter

THE daughter of a woman who died at a hospital told an inquest she was 'surprised' at how quickly her mother's condition deteriorated.

Ruby Lake died three days after being admitted to Gosport War Memorial Hospital in August 1998.

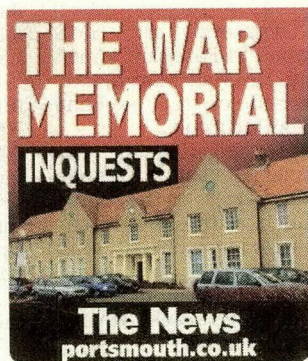
She had broken a hip in a fall at home and had an operation at the Royal Hospital Haslar in Gosport.

But she was later transferred to the War Memorial where she went downhill and died, the inquest heard yesterday.

Mrs Lake's daughter, Diane Mussell, told the jury that her mother had been an active, independent woman who had many friends and was involved in church life near her home at Alverstoke.

Mrs Mussell told the court: 'While she was in Haslar it was clear that the operation had had an effect on her. Her mood would go up and down.'

'When I was told she was being moved to the War Memorial Hospital I did raise



Ruby Lake PICTURE: BBC SOUTH

concerns with hospital staff saying that I did not think she was well enough to be moved.

'I was realistic enough to know that the trauma of the fall and the subsequent surgery can take its toll on elderly ladies.'

She said that on the second day in the War Memorial she noticed a marked deterioration in her mother's condition.

'She did not see much of the hospital staff. While I was visiting they came in to say that she was OK. They seemed quite caring,' said Mrs Mussell.

'At some stage it was stated

that my mother had been put on a syringe driver, but this seemed quite normal.'

The inquest into 10 patient deaths at the War Memorial has previously heard evidence from several families concerned about the use of the syringe drivers - automatic pumps containing strong painkillers - and the high levels of drugs they contained.

Mrs Mussell told the jury that her mother died on the evening of her third day in the hospital.

'It was quite quick,' she said. 'We were surprised at the speed it happened after

THE INQUEST SO FAR...

■ Day one - The inquest into 10 elderly patient deaths at Gosport War Memorial Hospital resumes.

■ Day two - Jane Barton, the doctor at the centre of the inquest, allegedly told Alan Lavender, son of 83-year-old Elsie: 'Your mother's come here to die.'

■ Day three - Retired nurse Lynne Barrett brands suggestions patients were over-medicated 'rubbish.' She calls Dr Barton 'courteous' and 'honest.'

■ Day four - Nurse Anita Turbitt says she queried drug prescriptions in 1991.

■ Day five - Professor David Black questions mor-

phine doses prescribed at the hospital.

■ Day six - Elsie Devine, 88, was allegedly given a 'substantial 'overdose' before her death. Prof Black says 74-year-old Robert Wilson could have died from a morphine-induced coma.

■ Day seven - Ian Wilson says dad Robert's last words to him were 'help me son, they're killing me'. Dr Barton admits pre-prescribing so nurses could administer or increase drugs.

■ Day eight - Charles Farthing accuses Dr Barton of stepfather Brian Cunningham's murder.

her move from Haslar.'

Surgeon Rear Admiral Michael Farquarson-Roberts, who was clinical director of surgery at Haslar at the time Mrs Lake was admitted, later told the hearings that he had no concerns about transferring patients to the War Memorial.

'I thought that the care that

was given was absolutely first class,' he said.

He said his father had also been treated at the Bury Road hospital. 'He was treated on two wards and I thought both were very well run. I was quite happy for him to be treated there,' he added.

(proceeding)

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Release of report 'will not be considered until after inquests'

A REPORT into the deaths of elderly patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital will not be released yet, the government has said.

Sir Peter Viggers, Conservative MP for Gosport, asked for Dr Richard Barker's study to be published.

But Ann Keen, parliamentary

under-secretary for health, said in the House of Commons that the report would not yet be issued.

She said the government would consider it once the inquest into 10 elderly patient deaths at the hospital between 1996 and 1999 had finished.

She added: 'We do intend, once the

inquests are concluded, and the General Medical Council have decided what their action will be, and subject to the appropriate individuals identified in the report to have had a chance to comment, to publish the Baker report, should the publication still be relevant - that is to say, it

may in the meantime become public knowledge from another official source, such as the proceedings of an inquest.'

Sir Peter's parliamentary question came after the MP angered relatives by calling for the issue of the deaths to be 'laid to rest.'

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