

INQUESTS: Coroner hears that 66-year-old was given increasing doses of morphine

Doctor denies that drugs given for pain caused death

THE doctor at the centre of the Gosport War Memorial Hospital inquests said yesterday the death of one of her patients was not caused by excessive medication.

GP Jane Barton believes Geoffrey Packman – known as Mick – died from a heart attack.

The 66-year-old ‘turned into a vegetable’ after being admitted to the hospital, according to daughter Victoria.

He died on Dryad ward – where Dr Barton was clinical assistant at the time – on September 3, 1999.

Mr Packman had taken only paracetamol prior to his admission, an inquest at Portsmouth heard.

But three days after his arrival, Dr Barton suspected Mr Packman had suffered a heart attack or gastro-intestinal bleed and prescribed 10mg of oral morphine.

A dose of between five and 10mg is initially recommended for severe pain. He received 20mg that day and 60mg the following day.

Three days later a syringe driver – an automatic pump to administer medication – was started containing 40mg of painkiller diamorphine and 20mg of sedative midazolam over 24 hours.

On September 1, two days later, the dosage increased again.

by **Clare Semke**
Health reporter

Barrister Tom Leeper, representing relatives, claims the increase in medication caused Mr Packman’s death.

He said: ‘It was as a result of these final increases and his gastro-intestinal bleed that he died.’

Dr Barton replied: ‘No. Excuse me. You are suggesting that the dose of opiates that he received and the gastro-intestinal bleed caused his death and I’m suggesting in my opinion his condition, including a possible heart attack caused his death – not the dose of opiates.’

Andrew Bradley, deputy assistant coroner for Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire, had earlier told the jury: ‘It certainly wouldn’t be my view that is a lethal dose.’

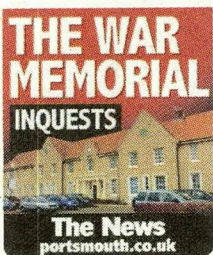
Mr Packman’s death is one of 10 at Gosport War Memorial Hospital being examined in an unprecedented inquest.

The others are 99-year-old Helena Service, 84-year-old Ruby Lake, 74-year-old Robert Wilson, 88-year-old Elsie Devine, 91-year-old Sheila Gregory, 82-year-old Leslie Pittock, 88-year-old Elsie Lavender, Arthur Cunningham, 79, and Enid Spurgeon, 92.

All of the deaths occurred between 1996 and 1999.

(Proceeding)

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Dr Jane Barton outside the hearing

92-year-old was only in hospital for ‘rehabilitation’



Enid Spurgeon
PICTURE: BBC SOUTH

A 92-YEAR-OLD woman who had broken her hip died from a stroke at the Gosport War Memorial after being admitted for rehabilitation, the inquest was told.

Dr Barton said when Enid Spurgeon was transferred from the Royal Hospital Haslar to the War Memorial she was

taking only paracetamol to ease her pain. She told the jury that it became clear quickly that Mrs Spurgeon ‘was in a lot of pain’.

Dr Barton said the patient’s notes said she had been sent to the hospital ‘for rehabilitation and gentle mobilisation’.

But the GP said that because

of Mrs Spurgeon’s pain she decided to put her on a syringe driver which pumped stronger painkillers into her body. It was solely to relieve the pain and distress that Mrs Spurgeon was suffering,’ said Dr Barton.

Alan Jenkins QC, who is representing Dr Barton, reminded the doctor that

earlier this week Mrs Spurgeon’s nephew Carl Jewell had told the inquests he believed the cause of the fatal stroke could have been caused by the diamorphine.

‘Can that happen?’ he asked Dr Barton. ‘It is not suggested in any of the text books,’ she replied.

TIMELINE

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 ‘rub-

bish’. She calls Dr Jane Barton ‘courteous’ and ‘honest’.

Day four

Nurse Anita Turbitt says she queried drug prescriptions in 1991.

Day five

Professor David Black questions morphine doses prescribed.

Day six

Elsie Devine, 88, was allegedly given a ‘substantial over-

dose’ 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’.

Day eight

Charles Farthing accuses Dr Barton of stepfather Brian Cunningham’s murder.

Day nine

Dad’s cry for help days before death

Daughter’s surprise at mother’s decline

Reports in The News

Diane Mussell says she is surprised how quickly 84-year-old mum Ruby Lake deteriorated after being admitted to Dryad Ward.

However, surgeon Rear-Admiral Michael Farquarson-Roberts thinks the care she received was ‘first class’.

Day 10

Vicky Packman says her father, Geoffrey, ‘became a vegetable’ three days after he was admitted to Gosport War Memorial.

Day 11

Captain Carl Jewell tells the inquest that his aunt Enid Spurgeon was treated like ‘a useless piece of society’.