

Comment

The News

We hope that investigation will help to bring closure

HOSPITAL DEATHS

It was back in 1998 when Gillian Mackenzie's mother, Gladys Richards, died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. Her daughter was not happy about the care Mrs Richards had received and went to the police.

More than 16 years later, she and the relatives of other patients who died at the hospital from the 1980s to the early 2000s are still searching for what they see as the truth.

Yes, there have been police investigations and inquests in the meantime.

A report by Professor Richard Baker, finally published last year after it took a decade to become public, provided valuable information about over-prescription, and in some cases over-use, of drugs.

Dr Jane Barton was then found guilty by the General Medical Council of 'multiple instances of serious professional misconduct' relating to 12 patients who died at the hospital.

But although the bereaved families may now be in possession of certain medical facts – the 'how' – they still desperately want to know the 'why'. Why were their loved ones mistreated when what they should have received was care and compassion?

After so long, we can understand their frustration and sense of injustice at a system they believe has prevented them from uncovering vital information.

So we are pleased that a new investigation into historic death rates at the hospital has now begun.

Care minister Norman Lamb is behind the probe, to be conducted by a panel led by Bishop James Jones, who previously chaired the Hillsborough Independent Panel looking into the deaths of 96 people at the Hillsborough football stadium disaster in 1989.

It's an entirely independent investigation, so important in order for the relatives to feel they can trust the findings and that openness and transparency are ensured.

As Gosport MP Caroline Dinenage says: 'This has been a very long and difficult journey. It marks the first step in finally bringing closure to this case.'

For the sake of those who still seek answers all these years later, we sincerely hope so.

10 Dec. 2014

FAMILIES SAY 'INQUIRY MUST REVEAL TRUTH'

Probe launched into Gosport
War Memorial Hospital deaths

FAMILIES of patients who died in suspicious circumstances at Gosport War Memorial Hospital say a new inquiry must establish what happened.

The probe will look at the deaths of dozens of pensioners

from the 1980s to the early 2000s.

Charles Farthing, whose stepfather died at GWMH, said: 'I hope this investigation will get to the bottom of it all.'

FULL STORY ■ PAGE 7

VOTE FOR
YOUR
FAVOURITE
IN THIS
YEAR'S
GUIDE
AWARDS



DETAILS - PAGE 13

SAVE £30 ON
NEW YEAR'S
EVE NIGHT
OUT FOR TWO

DETAILS - PAGE 29

WIN A PLAYSTATION 4 - PAGE 32

red. lounge
www.redlounge.co.uk

London Road, Cowplain, PO88DH

Open Christmas Day

Bookings only and must be prepaid

Havant Road, Drayton, PO61PA

Drift Road, Clanfield, PO80JL

Families welcome fresh inquiry into deaths at hospital

Bishop appointed to lead new probe to lead new probe

by PRIYA MISTRY

Health reporter
priya.mistry@thenews.co.uk

A NEW investigation looking at historic death rates at Gosport War Memorial Hospital has been welcomed by relatives of those who died.

Care minister Norman Lamb has launched an independent probe into concerns raised about the care and deaths of older people at hospital from the 1980s to the early 2000s.

The move for a new inquiry has been welcomed.

The stepson of Arthur 'Brian' Cunningham, who died at the hospital in 1998, aged 79, believes that it is long overdue.

Charles Farthing, said: 'There's been a blatant cover-up from the beginning. There may have been investigations, but someone has been controlling what's coming out and what information is not.'

'This has all been dreadful and an investigation like this should have happened 10 years ago.'

'But the system has been covering things up for whatever reason, and now I hope this investigation will get to the bottom of it all.'

His stepfather had been admitted to the hospital with bed sores, but died days later.

Dr Jane Barton had prescribed powerful painkillers, despite Mr Farthing asking for them not to be given.

The inquiry has been welcomed by Gosport MP Caroline Dineneage.

She said: 'This is a very important development and is welcome.'

'This panel is entirely independent from the government and the families have had a say in who is on the panel.'

'For all those involved, from bereaved families to hospital staff, this has been a very long and difficult journey.'

'This marks the first step in finally bringing closure to this case.'

Bishop James Jones, who previously chaired an independent panel looking at the Hillsborough stadium disaster, will head the investigation.

The panel is made up of geriatric medicine specialist Dr Colin Currie, investigative journalist David Hencke and former Scotland Yard Commander Duncan Jarrett. Dr Bill Kirkup, pathology and medical records expert, will join after his work with the Morecambe Bay investigation into the deaths of 23 cockle pickers concludes.

15-YEAR FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

THE death of Gladys Richards, pictured, at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in 1998 sparked a 15-year campaign for justice.

Following her death, daughter Gillian Mackenzie approached police with concerns over her mother's care under Dr Jane Barton, who was linked to a string of other deaths at the hospital.

This prompted an investigation by Hampshire Constabulary.

In April 2009, an inquest was held in Portsmouth into the deaths of five patients cared for by Dr Barton.

A jury ruled drugs prescribed by the GP contributed to the deaths of Elsie Devine, 88, Elsie Lavender, 83, Robert Wilson, 74, Brian

Cunningham, 79, and Geoffrey Packman, 68.

Following the inquest, the General Medical Council held a hearing into Dr Barton's fitness to practise.

She was found guilty of 'multiple instances of serious professional misconduct' relating to 12 patients who died at the hospital, but was not struck off.

Dr Barton decided to retire from Forton Medical Centre in Gosport in early 2010 and a year later applied to GMC to have her name removed from the register, and can no longer practise as a GP in the UK.

An inquest last year into the death of Ms Richards recorded a narrative verdict.



Ms Richards recorded a narrative verdict.

INQUIRY Gosport War Memorial Hospital



Bishop Jones said: 'Many families have ongoing concerns about the way their relatives were treated and how their complaints have been handled.'

'I want to help provide clarity and understanding for the families.'

'By working with them to set

and deliver the terms of reference with a panel of experts from different fields, I believe I can achieve this.'

'Independence and integrity will be the hallmarks of the panel's work.'

The panel will hear from families of those who died at the

hospital and examine documents from the time before producing a report. There is no set time for the investigation to conclude.

If any other family feels affected, then they can email enquiries@gosportpanel.independent.gov.uk

COMMENT ■ PAGE 22