

*News clips.**NEWS
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Misconduct GP to stay on register : A doctor who prescribed "potentially hazardous" levels of drugs to elderly patients who later died has escaped being struck off.

Dr Jane Barton will be allowed to continue working under certain conditions despite being found guilty of serious professional misconduct.

She was accused of a series of failings in her care of 12 patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in the 1990s.

Relatives and the General Medical Council criticised the panel's ruling.

Family members of those who had died shouted at the fitness to practise panel when the decision was delivered in central London.

Iain Wilson, the son of Robert Wilson, one of the patients who died, shouted: "You should hang your head in shame."

The panel had previously heard that elderly patients were left in "drug-induced comas" after being over-prescribed painkillers and sedatives.

" Throughout my career I have tried to do my very best for all my patients and have had only their interests and wellbeing at heart "

Dr Jane Barton

Dr Barton was found guilty of putting her patients at risk of premature death.

But the panel said it had taken into account her 10 years of safe practice as a GP in Gosport and 200 letters of support.

Dr Barton said she had to work under "unreasonable pressure" with an "excessive and increasing burden" in caring for patients.

But in a statement after the hearing the GMC criticised the independent panel.

Niall Dickson, GMC chief executive, said: "We are surprised by the decision to apply conditions in this case.

"Our view was the doctor's name should have been erased from the medical register following the panel's finding of serious professional misconduct.

"We will be carefully reviewing the decision before deciding what further action, if any, may be necessary."

Eleven conditions have been placed upon Dr Barton, including a ban on injecting opiates for three years.

In a statement after the panel's ruling, Dr Barton said: "I am disappointed by the decision of the GMC panel.

"Anyone following this case carefully will know that I was faced with an excessive and increasing burden in trying to care for patients at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

"None of the nurses who gave evidence were critical of my care of the patients in this inquiry.

"The consultants who had overall responsibility for the patients never expressed concern about my treatment and working practices.

"Throughout my career I have tried to do my very best for all my patients and have had only their interests and wellbeing at heart."

The hearing follows an inquest into 10 patients' deaths which found drugs to be a factor in five cases.

In April last year, a jury inquest at Portsmouth Coroner's Court decided that in the cases of patients Robert Wilson, 74, Geoffrey Packman, 66, and Elsie Devine, 88, the use of painkillers had been inappropriate for their conditions.

Arthur Cunningham, 79, and Elsie Lavender, 83, were prescribed medication appropriate for their condition, but in doses which contributed to their deaths, jurors found.

Dr Barton left the Hampshire hospital in 2000 but still practises as a GP in Gosport.

But she has been under certain conditions since July 2008.