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LIVE BREAKFAST

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## Drug used to 'quieten man down'

**An elderly hospital patient was given a sedative to "quieten him down", an inquest has heard.**



Brian Cunningham, 79, was admitted to Gosport War Memorial Hospital in 1998 with serious bed sores, jurors heard.

He was given diamorphine when he became agitated on the first night and died five days later. The doses increased in that time, the inquest heard.

Brian Cunningham died while being treated at the hospital

Inquests are being held at Portsmouth Coroner's Court into the deaths of 10 hospital patients over 10 years ago.

Mr Cunningham, who was also known as Arthur, was admitted on 21 September, 1998.

### 'No justification'

Tom Leeper, a solicitor representing four of the families, told the inquest that on the first day of his admission he became agitated with nurses and started taking off the dressing to his wound.

The inquest heard he was given a 10mg morphine tablet, but he remain agitated.

Jurors were told later in the night he became sedated and unable to take his usual medication and he was connected to a syringe driver and given 20mg of diamorphine - two to three times stronger than morphine.

The next day Mr Cunningham's step-son, Charles Farthing, was told by nurses "that his father had been given something to quiet him down", Mr Leeper said.



Professor Black said the diamorphine increases were "excessive"

Diamorphine was then increased four-fold over the following days before he died, he added.

Professor David Black, a independent specialist in elderly care, said the increases in the last two days of Mr Cunningham's life were "excessive".

He told the inquest: "There is no justification given for these in the notes.

"It is not clear if this was a medical or nursing decision."

Mr Cunningham died on 26 September, 1998. The cause of death on his death certificate was pneumonia.

Hampshire police carried out a series of investigations into the treatment of patients at the hospital in the late 1990s, but no prosecutions have been brought.

The inquests, expected to last six weeks, are being held into the deaths of Arthur Cunningham, 79, Elsie Devine, 88, Sheila Gregory, 91, Ruby Lake, 84, Elsie Lavender, 83, Geoffrey Packman, 67, Leslie Pittock, 83, Helena Service, 99, Enid Spurgin, 92, and Robert Wilson, 75.

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