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'Help me son, they're killing me'



Hospital deaths inquest told of dad's chilling last words

FULL STORY ■ PAGE 5

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INQUEST: Man told son staff were 'killing him' – three days later he was dead

Dad's cry for help days before death

by Clare Semke
Health reporter

AN ELDERLY patient who died at a hospital told his son that staff were 'killing him', an inquest heard.

Robert Wilson allegedly made the cry for help three days before his death at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

Son Ian – pictured on the front page – told the inquest into the 74-year-old's death and those of nine other patients at the hospital those were his dad's last words to him.

'The night before I left I leant down to give my dad a cuddle and he spoke his very last words to me, and he said "help me son, they are killing me".'

'I said "no they are not, dad, they are trying to do their very best for you", and left him there.

'When I went in the next day he was in a coma.'

Alcoholic Mr Wilson was transferred to the Gosport War Memorial from Queen Alexandra Hospital in Cosham where he had been admitted 16 days earlier, having fallen and broken his arm.

He was reportedly coherent on admission on October 14, 1998 but was prescribed oral morphine – having only been treated with paracetamol, painkillers and five small doses of morphine prior to his transfer.

A day later he was given 50mg of morphine and his condition rapidly deteriorated, the Portsmouth Crown Court jury heard.

Mr Wilson later became unresponsive, short of breath and his arms and legs were swollen.

On October 16 he was given 30mg of morphine and 40mg of diamorphine through an automatic pump. He died two days later.

The eight-strong jury has already heard how expert Professor David Black could not exclude the possibility that Mr Wilson had died from a coma caused by the prescription of

DEATHS BETWEEN 1996 AND 1999

■ The inquests are being held into the death of Arthur Cunningham, 79, from Gosport who died on September 26, 1998; Elsie Devine, 88, on November 21, 1999; Sheila Gregory, 91, of Gosport, on November 22, 1999 and Ruby Lake, 84, of Gosport, on August 21, 1998.

■ The other deaths are of Elsie Lavender, 83, of Gosport, on March 6, 1996; Geoffrey Packman, 67, of Emsworth, on September 3, 1999; Leslie Pittock, 82, on January 24, 1996; Helena Service, 99, of Gosport, on June 5, 1997; Enid Spurgin, 92, of Gosport, on April 13, 1999, and Robert Wilson, of Sarisbury Green, on October 18, 1998.

■ All 10 deaths occurred between 1996 and 1999.



Robert Wilson

morphine. Son Ian said he was not informed by staff why the syringe driver – which automatically pumps drugs into the system – was being used.

'I think it is because of the drugs that his condition changed,' he said.

He also told the inquest that staff at the Bury Road hospital had refused to keep him informed of his father's condition because he was not the designated family member.

The inquest heard that Mr Wilson died of heart failure as well as renal and liver failure.

(Proceeding)

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Dr Jane Barton

Managers 'ignored concerns' over plans to increase patient numbers

THE doctor responsible for looking after elderly people at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital quit her role in a row over patient care, the inquest heard.

Dr Jane Barton resigned as clinical assistant in July 2000 after 12 years in the post.

Taking the stand for the first time, she said NHS managers wanted staff in Dryad and Daedalus wards to take on more complex patients to ease bed-blocking at acute hospitals including Queen Alexandra, Cosham.

A senior manager wrote in a letter to Dr Barton and other staff that some

surgeries had to be cancelled due to overwhelming demand.

Dr Barton raised concerns about the added pressure this would place on already stretched staff but, she claims, her fears were ignored. She said it would 'inevitably lead to further serious and damaging complaints about the service given in my wards'.

Dr Barton added that the hospital was struggling to cope with 40 per cent of continuing care patients in Portsmouth and south-east Hampshire.

The inquest into the deaths of 10 patients in the now defunct Dryad and

Daedalus wards between 1996 and 1999 heard how Dr Barton was a full-time GP as well as clinical assistant at the hospital.

She was regularly expected to see and review up to 40 patients between 7.30am and 8.45am five days a week at that time.

She then fulfilled her general practice duties but would often return to the hospital at lunch times, evenings and weekends, the jury heard. She also took calls at home.

By 1998 the wards were operating at about 80 per cent capacity but managers wanted to increase this to 90 per cent.



For more on the inquest see portsmouth.co.uk