

## Doctor is accused over deaths of 12 patients

(Daily Mail)

**TWELVE** elderly patients died after being over-prescribed painkillers and sedatives by the same doctor, a disciplinary hearing was told yesterday.

Dr Jane Barton prescribed strong opiates in 'excessive' doses, leaving the men and women in 'drug-induced comas', the hearing was told.

Many died within days of coming under her care on two wards at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital, Hampshire, between 1996 and 1999.

Opening the General Medical Council hearing, Tom Kark, for the GMC, said the elderly patients expected to be rehabilitated and sent home. But the two wards became known as 'the end of the line'.

Dr Barton wrote prescriptions for drugs, including diamorphine, which gave nurses licence to increase dosage massively.

Police carried out three separate probes into 92 suspicious deaths at the hospital in the late 1990s, referring ten cases to the Crown Prosecution Service, but no charges were brought.

Dr Barton, who graduated from Oxford University and still works as a GP, took charge of the two wards in 1988.

Of one patient, Ruby Lake, 84, Mr Kark told the hearing: 'It is likely that this patient died not from illness but as a result of the combined effects of the drugs in her system.'

Dr Barton admits that the dosage prescribed for 11 of the 12 patients was 'potentially hazardous', that for 11 a situation where excessive drugs could be administered had been created, while for ten the dose range was too wide.

She also admits she failed to keep clear, accurate and contemporaneous notes on her patients.

She denies serious professional misconduct.

The hearing continues.