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**HEARING:** Surgeon tells GMC of surprise at colleague's verdict on 'bright, alert' patient

# 'Nurses can confirm death' – Doctor's note on woman, 84

by Chris Owen  
Chief reporter

AN ELDERLY woman, described as 'well and comfortable' the day before she was sent to a Gosport hospital, had a note written on her records on arrival saying a doctor was happy for nurses to confirm her death.

Ruby Lake was 84 when she was transferred to Gosport War Memorial Hospital in August 1998. She died there three days later.

She had suffered a broken hip in a fall at home in Alverstoke, Gosport, and was given an emergency hip replacement at the Royal Hospital Haslar.

But after a three-week stay at that hospital she was

DR JANE Barton was the only doctor investigated in relation to the death of 92 elderly patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

The GP – who is a partner at Forton Medical Centre in Whites Place, Gosport – was clinical assistant and in charge of the day-to-day running of the now defunct Dryad and Daedalus wards at the Bury Road site until her resignation in July 2000.

moved to Gosport War Memorial for rehabilitation.

The day she arrived Gosport GP Dr Jane Barton immediately wrote on her notes that she was happy for nurses to confirm her death.

## INVESTIGATION

Ruby Lake was admitted to Daedalus ward.

A damning report published by the then Commission for Health Improvement in 2002 found patients were being put at risk.

The deaths were subject to three inquiries by Hampshire Police and a probe by the Crown Prosecution Service – which decided in November 2006 that no charges would be brought.



Dr Jane Barton

At a London hearing at the General Medical Council examining Dr Barton's fitness to practise, a Royal Navy surgeon said he was 'surprised' to see that written on Mrs Lake's notes. Surgeon

Commander Timothy Coleman, who was a senior house officer at Haslar in 1998, said that from Mrs Lake's Haslar notes he could see that before her transfer she had been making reason-

able progress for a woman of her age.

He said: 'At 9am on the day she was transferred to the War Memorial her notes say that she was 'well, comfortable and happy'.

GMC panel member Dr Roger Smith said to Sgn-Cdr Coleman: 'You saw her on the day of her transfer. You said she was bright and alert.

'The nursing staff said she was mobilising with a Zimmer frame. Do you find it surprising that when she arrived at the War Memorial hospital she had 'happy for nursing staff to confirm death' written on her notes?'

Sgn-Cdr Coleman said: 'Yes, it is surprising that she could have deteriorated so quickly.'