

■ **GMC:** Consultant backs accused doctor

3/7/09

GP's care for elderly 'generally sensible'

by **Clare Semke**
Health reporter

THE doctor accused of misconduct over the deaths of 12 elderly hospital patients has been praised for her standard of care.

Dr Jane Tandy told a General Medical Council hearing she was happy with GP Jane Barton's care at Gosport War Memorial Hospital and said the decisions she made were 'generally sensible'.

The consultant geriatrician worked on the now defunct Dryad ward, where Dr Barton was then clinical assistant, from June 1994 to September 1996.

She gave evidence on day 18 of the hearing into Dr Barton's fitness to practice.

Allegations centre on poor notekeeping, wide dose ranges of powerful drugs including Diamorphine – a form of heroin – sedatives and antipsychotics.

Dr Tandy told the London hearing: 'I was very happy with her care.'

'I thought the decisions she made were generally sensible.'

But when asked about time pressures on Dr Barton, who juggled the day-to-day running of the Gosport War Memorial wards with her job as a partner at Forton Medical Centre, she said: 'I think the thing I remember most was I didn't feel the notekeeping was a high standard, but it was more important that she saw the patients.'

'From patients referred in from other hospitals her standard of notekeeping didn't seem to be out of the ordinary.'

Dr Barton has already admitted that dose ranges of powerful drugs she prescribed were too wide, and could have led to elderly patients being given too many drugs.

She also admits her prescriptions were 'potentially hazardous,' and that she failed to keep adequate notes.

FIVE DEATHS PROBED

■ The hearing into the fitness to practice of Dr Barton – who denies serious professional misconduct – is set to last until at least August 21.

It comes after an inquest jury at Portsmouth Coroner's Court in April heard that the deaths of five patients at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital were 'more than minimally' contributed to by the medication given.

In three cases they found the use of painkillers was inappropriate.

But they also ruled the medication had been administered for therapeutic reasons in all five cases and that medication had not contributed to a further five deaths.

The GP – a partner at Forton Medical Centre, Whites Place, Gosport – was clinical assistant on now defunct Dryad and Daedalus wards where the patients died between 1996 and 1999.

Dr Barton could be banned from practising medicine if found guilty by the General Medical Council.

And Dr Barton has agreed her notes were 'inappropriate' and not in patients' best interests.

The panel is examining her conduct in relation to the care, treatment and subsequent deaths of Geoffrey Packman (known as Mick), Ruby Lake, 84, Robert Wilson, 74, Elsie Devine, 88, Leslie Pittock, 82, Elsie Lavender, 88, Arthur Cunningham, 79 (known as Brian), Enid Spurgeon, 92, Alice Wilkie, Jean Stevens, 73, Eva Page and Gladys Richards, 91.

She denies serious professional misconduct.

(Proceeding).

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