

Experts have difference in opinion over drugs given

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WANTS ANSWERS Lesley O'Brien, one of Gladys Richards' daughters, outside Portsmouth Guildhall

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Doctors differ on whether pain relief contributed to death

TWO medical experts have opposing views on the amount of painkillers used on an elderly woman who died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

On day two of the inquest into the death of 91-year-old Gladys Richards at the hospital in August 1998, the court heard from two doctors.

As reported, Mrs Richards, of Lee-on-the-Solent, had a hip operation at the former Royal Haslar Hospital, in Gosport, and was transferred to GWMH for rehabilitative care.

But after she suffered a haematoma – bruised blood – Mrs Richards, was given diamorphine

through a syringe driver and died five days later.

Dr Richard Reid, now retired, worked as a consultant in geriatrics at Queen Alexandra Hospital, Cosham, in 1998.

He assessed Mrs Richards and put her forward for rehabilitation.

Mrs Richards was under the care of Dr Jane Barton at GWMH.

The court heard from Alan Jenkins, who is representing Dr Barton, about how she would see patients and their families in ward rounds, after hours.

She would normally have an hour to visit 40 patients over two wards,

but would stay on to ensure she saw everyone.

Dr Reid said: 'Dr Barton was assiduous in her care and duty.'

The amount of painkillers prescribed has also been discussed.

Dr Reid said: 'I feel it was entirely appropriate and reasonable.'

'I think it was unlikely to be responsible for her demise.'

But the inquest also heard that medical records were not always updated properly.

Professor Robin Ferner, an independent medical expert in drug reactions, was hired by Gillian Mackenzie – Mrs Richards' daughter.

When asked if a high dose of sedatives had hastened the death of Mrs Richards, professor Ferner replied 'yes'.

The inquest, set to last nine days, continues.

Dr Barton was assiduous in her care and duty

Dr Richard Reid, giving evidence to the inquest