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OPINIONS
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The  News

We hope that investigation will help to bring closure

HOSPITAL DEATHS

It was back in 1998 when Gillian Mackenzie's mother, Gladys Richards, died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. Her daughter was not happy about the care Mrs Richards had received and went to the police.

More than 16 years later, she and the relatives of other patients who died at the hospital from the 1980s to the early 2000s are still searching for what they see as the truth.

Yes, there have been police investigations and inquests in the meantime.

A report by Professor Richard Baker, finally published last year after it took a decade to become public, provided valuable information about over-prescription, and in some cases over-use, of drugs.

Dr Jane Barton was then found guilty by the General Medical Council of 'multiple instances of serious professional misconduct' relating to 12 patients who died at the hospital.

But although the bereaved families may now be in possession of certain medical facts – the 'how' – they still desperately want to know the 'why'. Why were their loved ones mistreated when what they should have received was care and compassion?

After so long, we can understand their frustration and sense of injustice at a system they believe has prevented them from uncovering vital information.

So we are pleased that a new investigation into historic death rates at the hospital has now begun.

Care minister Norman Lamb is behind the probe, to be conducted by a panel led by Bishop James Jones, who previously chaired the Hillsborough Independent Panel looking into the deaths of 96 people at the Hillsborough football stadium disaster in 1989.

It's an entirely independent investigation, so important in order for the relatives to feel they can trust the findings and that openness and transparency are ensured.

As Gosport MP Caroline Dinéage says: 'This has been a very long and difficult journey. It marks the first step in finally bringing closure to this case.'

For the sake of those who still seek answers all these years later, we sincerely hope so.