

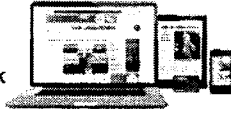


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THE SUNDAY TIMES

Convalescent unit faces inquest into suspicious deaths

Lois Rogers

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Jack Straw, the justice secretary, has ordered an inquest into 10 suspicious deaths at an old people's convalescent unit in Hampshire.

form of euthanasia.

The patients were among a group of 92 who died unexpectedly after being given abnormally large doses of morphine and other drugs at the Gosport War Memorial hospital. Their relatives believe their deaths were a

Straw has demanded the coroner's investigation even though at least seven of the bodies were cremated. An inquest cannot take place in the absence of a corpse unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The justice ministry believes there is sufficient anxiety about the circumstances of the cases to require such a procedure, which, in the absence of remains, will be based only on a review of medical records and witness statements.

The allegation of "murder by euthanasia" is similar to that levelled against Harold Shipman, the GP from Greater Manchester who was

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