

Doctor faces ban over deaths of 12 patients

By Jon Swaine

A DOCTOR faces being struck off after prescribing overdoses of painkillers to 12 elderly patients who died in her care.

A General Medical Council hearing found that evidence against Dr Jane Barton would be enough to result in her being found guilty of serious professional misconduct.

Dr Barton, who qualified in 1972, admitted a string of alle-



Dr Jane Barton's conduct was found to have been inappropriate and potentially hazardous

gations about her treatment of the patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital, Hampshire, between 1996 and 1999.

She was investigated during three separate police inquiries examining a total of 92 deaths at the hospital. No criminal charges were brought.

Dr Barton gave "anticipatory" prescriptions, which allowed nurses to give medication when necessary, the hearing was told.

In several cases, the dosage range was too wide and the lowest doses were too high.

Evidence was given of cases where patients had died when their families had not considered their condition to be life-threatening.

The son of one of the patients demanded that Dr Barton be struck off and a fresh police inquiry started. Iain Wilson's father, Robert, 74, died after his admission to the hospital in Oct 1998 with a broken shoulder.

Mr Wilson said outside the hearing: "She's got to be struck off. My dad had a broken shoulder. You don't die of a broken shoulder."

Dr Barton still works at For-ton Medical Centre, Gosport. She is subject to a temporary ban on prescribing the pain-killer diamorphine.

Andrew Reid, the GMC panel chairman, told Dr Barton: "The panel has made multiple findings that your conduct has been inappropriate, potentially hazardous and/or not in the best interests of your patients."

The hearing was adjourned to allow evidence to be heard in order to decide whether Dr Barton was guilty of serious professional misconduct.



GP who gave fatal drug cocktails to 12 patients

By **Jenny Hope**
Medical Correspondent

A DOCTOR who gave lethal cocktails of painkillers to 12 elderly hospital patients could be struck off after she was found guilty yesterday by the General Medical Council.

Dr Jane Barton was branded a 'monster' by relatives who have fought for justice for ten years.

Excessive doses of diamorphine - medicinal heroin - and up to six times the recommended amount of the sedative midazolam were administered to patients to 'keep them quiet', it was claimed.

Dr Barton, a GP worked part-time at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital in Hampshire, where most elderly patients expected to be rehabilitated and sent home, the GMC hearing was told.

But the two wards she ran, Dryad and Daedalus, became known as 'the end of the line'.

'Fiercely inhuman'

Dr Barton told one patient at the community hospital 'it won't be long now' after giving her a large dose of painkillers, the tribunal heard.

She also introduced a system of pre-emptive prescribing which allowed nurses to increase the amount of painkillers without the need for a doctor's presence.

After an 11-week hearing, a GMC disciplinary panel found that some prescriptions written in advance could result in overdosing.

But it found that allegations that she failed to assess patients appropriately before prescribing opiates were not proved.

The GMC will consider next year, at a date to be decided, whether Dr Barton should be struck off the medical register.

Panel chairman Andrew Reid said: 'The panel has made multiple findings that your conduct has been inappropriate, potentially hazardous and/or not in the best interests of your patients.'

'It has concluded that the facts found proved, both admitted and otherwise, would not be insufficient to support a finding of serious professional misconduct.' The findings are the latest step in the campaign by families to expose events at the community hospital between January 1996 and November 1999.

In April this year, an inquest was held into the deaths of ten patients at the hospital. In five of the cases a jury ruled that overdosing contributed to the deaths.

After the inquest, Bridget Devine, whose grandmother Elsie Devine, 88, was one of the patients, said of Dr Barton: 'We think she is fiercely inhuman - a monster.' Hampshire Police

investigated three times between 1998 and 2006, but the Crown Prosecution Service decided there was insufficient evidence to bring charges against Dr Barton.

Geriatric expert Professor Ford told the GMC hearing Dr Barton's prescriptions were 'not justified, reckless and potentially very dangerous'.

Last year, the GMC imposed conditions on Dr Barton's registration as an interim measure.

She is banned from prescribing diamorphine, but is allowed to work as a GP in Gosport.

j.hope@dailymail.co.uk



Dr Jane Barton: Could be struck off

