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Operation ROCHESTER

Family Group Members Investigation Update Bulletin No. 7

17th February 2005

Investigation

As I indicated in my last bulletin in September 2004, our investigation is progressing well and is still within the expected timeframe. With regard to the cases within category 3, we are continuing the process of interviewing and taking statements from key medical and nursing staff. This process is likely to continue during the course of 2005.

During our enquiry we have been able to write to a significant number of individuals and let them know the outcome of our investigation. This is an ongoing process and a limited number of category 2 cases are still being quality assured. As soon as this process is complete we will be able to make contact with the relatives in question.

Medical Experts

The third tier of medical experts commissioned to review category 3 are conducting their analysis of medical records, associated healthcare professional statements and family group member's statements. As we have previously explained, it is these experts who will provide evidence for final consideration by the Crown Prosecution Service.

Rochester Staff

You will have read the letter herewith from Steve Watts. As the Assistant Chief Constable, Mr. Watts has the ultimate responsibility for all police operations and investigations within Hampshire. As such, he will continue to take an overview of our investigation.

Media

This enquiry continues to attract a great deal of media interest. Our approach from the onset has been to strike a balance that allows the media and the public to be informed of the progress of the investigation, without compromising the final determination.

On the 14th February 2005 the Portsmouth Evening News published an article that intimated that files in respect of 28 cases had been passed to the CPS. It is unfortunate that the NEWS suggested this to be the case, particularly as the police have refused to be drawn on numbers generally given that this type of reporting could ultimately have an adverse effect both on the outcome of the investigation, in terms of prosecution and securing the ongoing co-operation of Healthcare Staff, which to date has been first class.

As indicated above, we continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding patient deaths at Gosport War Memorial Hospital during the 1990's and to liaise with the Crown Prosecution Service in this respect.

This liaison will continue throughout 2005 during which papers will be incrementally passed to the CPS for their consideration. It is not likely that any decision as to the outcome will be made until later in the year. When any decisions have been reached, the family group members in question will be informed before anybody else.

The investigation team remain committed to ensuring that family group members are informed at every stage as to the status of the investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of their loved one

We continue to receive the fullest co-operation from the Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust and the Healthcare Staff involved.

Conclusion

Since the onset of our investigation we have scrutinized the medical records of 90 former patients of the Gosport War Memorial Hospital. To keep our relatives informed we have, as you know, utilized bulletins such as this. We have now reached a stage of our investigation where the numbers of relatives involved has been reduced to a lower figure. Consequently, we have decided that this will be our last bulletin. In the future we will keep our relatives informed by way of personal letter.

May I take this opportunity to thank all family group members for the patience and support displayed during the course of this protracted and detailed investigation.

In the mean time, should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact our Family Liaison Officer, **Code A**

Yours sincerely,

Code A

Nigel Niven
Deputy SIO