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CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE



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PRESS RELEASE

19 December 2006

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CPS ADVISES NO PROSECUTIONS OVER DEATHS AT GOSPORT WAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Crown Prosecution Service's Special Crime Division has advised Hampshire Police there is insufficient evidence to prosecute any person over the deaths of 10 patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital, Hampshire.

Reviewing lawyer in the Special Crime Division, Paul Close, said: "I considered whether the evidence gathered by the police showed that a criminal offence had been committed, and particularly the offence of gross negligence manslaughter.

"After looking at all the evidence - including that of experts - and seeking the advice of counsel, I decided there was insufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction to prosecute anyone for gross negligence manslaughter over the deaths of 10 patients at the hospital."

To succeed in a prosecution for gross negligence manslaughter, all the circumstances have to be taken into account and the prosecution has to prove:

- There was a duty of care owed by the accused to the deceased;
- There was a breach of the duty of care by the accused;
- The breach was a substantial cause of the death of the deceased;
- The breach was so great as to be characterised as gross negligence and therefore a crime.

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Mr Close said: "Errors alone, no matter how catastrophic the consequences may be, do not, of themselves, amount to gross negligence.

"I have written to the families explaining my decision and offering my deepest sympathy for their bereavement. I have offered to meet them to discuss how I reached my decision."

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Gosport War Memorial Hospital is a 113 bed community hospital managed by the Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust and provides continuing care for long stay elderly patients.
2. Hampshire Police first investigated the deaths of elderly patients at the hospital in 1998, following the death of Mrs Gladys Richards. In August 2001, the CPS advised there was insufficient evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction against any individual involved in the care of Mrs Richards.
3. Following the case of Mrs Richards, various people contacted the police who launched a further inquiry and reviewed a total of 90 deaths. In July 2006, the police announced that following extensive investigation and reference to medical experts there was no criminal negligence in 80 of the 90 cases. The remaining 10 deaths, dating from 1997 to 1999, were referred to the CPS.
4. For further information contact Julie Seddon, CPS Press Office Code A or email JtCode A