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17 July 2002

Mr Allan Milburn, Health Minister
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Milburn

I am writing to you today in relation to the publication of the Commission For Health Improvement's report relating to the Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

I am interested to know what your response is to the issues raised in this report in light of the seriousness of the issues highlighted by CHI. The report has acknowledged that in the late 1990s the hospital was allowing excessive amounts of strong drugs, including Diamorphine, Midazolam and Haloperidol, to be administered to patients. The report also notes the anticipatory prescribing of these drugs and the inappropriate application of palliative care guidelines to rehabilitation patients. I will quote if I may just a short part from page 13 of the report which sums up the concerns of CHI "... the use and combination of medicines used in 1998 was excessive and outside normal practice".

What I would like to know is what is going to be done about this. An apology from the Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust (PCT) after blaming a "systems failure" is unacceptable. Although the trust failed to put systems in place to prevent individuals acting inappropriately, the fact remains that in this case, an individual doctor, with many years of training and experience 'chose' to prescribe and administer those drugs to elderly people. Whilst practices may have now changed at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital, what is going to be done about the actions of those people in the past, after all Harold Shipman is serving fifteen life sentences for what is clearly a similar scenario. What is being done in other NHS hospitals to ensure that procedures are in place to prevent wicked acts by individuals. One of my biggest concerns is that the doctor concerned in this case is still practising and there appears to be nothing in place to prevent her leaving to go and work in another 'cottage' hospital where procedures may yet need to change.

At the moment nobody is prepared to accept any responsibility for what is happening at this NHS hospital. It is time that somebody stood up and took positive action in this matter.

I look forward to hearing from you and to hear what actions your department will be taking relating to the very serious issues raised.

Yours sincerely

Miss E Yeats

CC. Mr Tony Blair, Prime Minister.