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First published on Friday 23 August 2002:

Hospital deaths files being sent to CPS

by *Daily Echo* reporter

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THE FILES of eight elderly patients who died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital are set to be referred to the Crown Prosecution Service this month by Hampshire police.

The move follows an earlier investigation by police following concerns over the use of pain killers at the hospital, although no prosecutions were brought at the time.

An investigation was launched by police following allegations that a woman was unlawfully killed at the hospital in 1998.

Detectives sent a file to prosecutors who later dropped the case claiming there was insufficient evidence to press charges against the Bury Road hospital.

Speaking yesterday, Deputy Chief Constable of Hampshire police, Ian Redhead, said: "The purpose of the police service is to submit the evidence in our possession to the Crown Prosecution Service.

"That has happened, but there are some additional things that have occurred and it is right that the Crown give us a view in relation to that. If the CPS say we would like you to do some more work we will take cognisance of that."

An investigation team from the Commission for Health Improvement interviewed staff, patients and relatives of former patients as part of a wider investigation into the care of older people.

Its report, which was published last month, **did not rule out that poor drug prescribing practices contributed to the death of patients at the hospital.**

But the commission also concluded it was unable to determine if levels of drug prescription contributed to the death of patients.

Criticism was also levelled at Portsmouth Healthcare NHS Trust which, the commission said, should have responded earlier to concerns raised by relatives of patients who died at the hospital.

The report concluded:

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- There were insufficient local prescribing guidelines and the lack of a rigorous, routine review of pharmacy data

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- There were no arrangements in place for the adequate supervision of clinical assistants working on Dryad and Daedalus wards in 1998

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- The CHI found no evidence that the impact of changes since 1999 had been robustly monitored and reviewed.

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Doctors and nurses from the hospital are set to appear at the General Medical Council next week for professional conduct hearings.

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