

Governance Directorate
Education Centre
St Mary's Hospital
Milton
Portsmouth PO3 6AD

Code A

1 November 2002

PERSONAL

Dr D Melville

Code A

Code A

(Please quote Our Ref: on all correspondence)

Dear Dr Melville

Code A

You may or may not remember this case. While you were working in Portsmouth in January 2001, you provided John Bevan, the then Medical Director, with a report of your involvement in the late **Code A** treatment (copy enclosed), as **Code A** had raised some concerns about **Code A** treatment. You will see that your report deals with your discussions with **Code A** about **Code A** condition and the likelihood of **Code A** surviving.

After all this time, **Code A** has been prompted into contacting the Trust's new Chief Executive, Alan Bedford, to ask further questions as a result of a Police investigation going on locally about elderly patients in a hospital in Gosport allegedly being given diamorphine inappropriately leading to their death. Although the Trust answered similar questions that **Code A** asked at the time of the complaint (copy correspondence enclosed), Mr Bedford has asked that the issue be reviewed and that another response be sent as soon as possible.

You will see from **Code A** latest letter (copy enclosed) that **Code A** questions are:-

1. Was the person who administered the diamorphine at midnight on 13/11/1999 authorised to do so?
2. What are the guidelines for administering diamorphine to patients with respiratory conditions?

Code A

I enclose a copy of the relevant pages of clinical records, from which you will see that it is not entirely clear who gave the dose of diamorphine, although it seems from the drug chart that a doctor with the bleep no 113 prescribed it. Although the writing is slightly difficult to read, it seems that your signature at the end of the entry on 13/11/1999 at 11.10 pm is followed by "(SHO 113)". If that is correct, then it seems that you prescribed the diamorphine. Do you think you would have actually administered the dose yourself or would you have left it to the nurse to administer. In any event, I believe that both you and the nurse in question were of sufficient seniority to administer the injection, but it would be nice to be able to tell **Code A** categorically who gave it, as you can understand the questions it will raise with **Code A** if we are unable to do so.

Secondly, with regard to the guidelines for administering diamorphine to patients with respiratory conditions, one of our Pharmacists has explained to me that this is a decision based on all the factors of the patient's condition at the time. There may be problems with respiration if large doses of diamorphine are given, or if large amounts are allowed to accumulate in the body, but **Code A** only had one dose of 2.5 mg which is not at a large dose at all and therefore she did not think that giving one small dose of the drug was inappropriate.

However, it would be helpful if you could just confirm your decision making process when prescribing this drug and anything else that you wish to add that may be helpful in answering **Code A** concerns.

I am sorry to have to bother you again with this matter but thank you for your help and look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Code A

Litigation Manager

Enc

Code A