

Sir Liam Donaldson
Chief Medical Officer
Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2NS

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

30th April 2002

Dear Sir Liam

Gosport War Memorial Hospital – review of clinical records

The review is nearing completion, and I intend to combine all the analyses into a single report in due course. The principal outstanding matter is an analysis of HES data. It has been frustratingly difficult to obtain these data, but Peter Goldblatt at National Statistics is working hard to sort the problem out, and I hope to have these data soon.

However, I do not anticipate that analysis of HES data will uncover anything unexpected. The eventual findings are likely to be very much as described in the attached report based on a review of clinical records. This has just been completed, and highlights the quick resort to opiate medication when patients who had considerable clinical problems deteriorated. This policy may have been justifiable in many cases, but in some it may have been premature. The records often failed to adequately explain decisions to commence opiates, and there was a failure to note recent fractures on certificates of the cause of death.

These findings are likely to be a consequence of a conservative culture towards the management of these severely ill patients, rather than an active approach to treatment. There may also have been weaknesses in leadership and teamwork (it should be remembered that this latter conclusion is based on a review of records only, and additional evidence would be required to substantiate it).

This interim report is submitted at this stage because Hampshire Police have requested a discussion on the progress of our separate investigations. I have informed them that I would seek your approval before agreeing to a discussion. The contents of the attached report contain my views on the events at Gosport, and would be the findings that could be shared with them in a meeting. I will not enter a discussion with the police until I receive your advice.

Yours sincerely

Professor Richard Baker
Director
Clinical Governance Research & Development Unit