

CONFIDENTIAL

Gosport War Memorial Hospital Patient Inquests Staff Briefing Pack

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Introduction

On 18th March a coroners inquest into the deaths of ten patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital (GWMH) from 1996 – 1999 will commence.

The inquests are scheduled for six weeks from 18th March 2009 and ten separate verdicts will be delivered at the close of proceedings. The coroner is AM Bradley, HM Assistant Deputy Coroner Portsmouth and South East. The inquests will take place at Portsmouth Combined Court, Winston Churchill Avenue, Portsmouth.

It is likely that there will be media interest in the process. A communications team is in place to liaise with the media. This pack is designed to provide you with some background information and importantly the steps you should take if approached for information by the press and members of the media. If you have any questions please call the communications team on 023 8062 7434.

Media Enquiries Information

In event of media enquiry please notify your duty manager who will contact the communications team. The communications team is proactively managing media enquiries around the GWMH inquests and will co-ordinate responses to the media.

Press should identify themselves to you and will have a press badge. They are not permitted to film on NHS premises without prior consent.

Office hours Communications Team numbers

Hampshire PCT Communications Team: 023 8062 7434

Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust Communications Team: 02392 288517

Trimedia: 02380 382970

Hampshire PCT On call out of hours rota

Code A

Dealing With Media Enquiries

If you are approached at home or at work either in person or on the phone, please politely refer the press to the communications team and inform your duty manager:

Thank you for your interest - can I direct you to our communications team who are managing media enquiries during the inquests proceedings and who will be able to give you more information and arrange for you to speak to or interview the appropriate person. Please call 02380 627434 for the communications team.

Dealing with Media Enquiries (reception staff)

- When taking a media enquiry, please be helpful and polite.
- You do not need to respond to any questions that the media put to you, however innocuous or 'off the record' they may be.
- Please politely pass the enquiry on to the communications team and inform your duty manager.
- We have identified staff who are briefed to act as spokespeople.
- Please use the following guide to take details from the journalist and pass them on to the Communications Team who will deal promptly with the enquiry.

Name:
Publication / Media title:
Phone number:
Date and time of call:
Nature of enquiry:
Response required by:
Enquiry passed to:
When?
Duty Manager Informed?

Media Statement

Inquest into deaths at Gosport War Memorial Hospital

A coroner's inquest is being held into the deaths of ten patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in the late 1990's. The inquests are due to commence on 18th March 2009.

The local NHS has been working closely with HM Coroner over the last few months to ensure that all the relevant information is available to support the Coroner's investigation.

We co-operated fully with the previous four-year police investigation and with an earlier independent review by the Commission for Health Improvement.

Many procedures at Gosport War Memorial Hospital were revised as a result of the earlier enquiries. We are very confident that the hospital provides safe, high quality care to all its patients and will continue to play an important role in local healthcare services for many years to come.

If you have any further enquiries, please contact the Hampshire PCT Communications team on 023 8062 7434.

What is an Inquest?

An inquest is a limited fact-finding inquiry to establish the answers to

- **who** has died,
- **when** and **where** the death occurred, and
- **how** the cause of death arose

An inquest is not a trial. It is an inquiry into the facts surrounding a death. It is not the job of the coroner to blame anyone for the death, as a trial would do, and there are no speeches. However, the Coroner does have the power to investigate the main cause of death and also "any acts or omissions which directly led to the cause of death".

Gosport War Memorial Hospital Inquests

The coroner has ordered inquests into the deaths of ten patients at Gosport Ward Memorial Hospital (GWMH) from 1996 – 1999.

The inquest is concerned with the deaths of people who were in-patients on Dryad and Daedalus wards.

Listed Inquest Patients

- Leslie Pittock (died 24/01/96) Dryad Ward - aged 83
- Elsie Lavender (06/03/96) Daedalus Ward - aged 84
- Robert Wilson (died 18/10/96) Dryad Ward - aged 73
- Helena Service (died 05/06/97) Dryad Ward - aged 99
- Ruby Lake (died 21/08/98) Dryad Ward - aged 85
- Arthur Cunningham (died 26/09/98) Dryad Ward - aged 79
- Enid Spurgeon (died 13/04/99) Dryad Ward - aged 92
- Geoffrey Packman (died 03/09/99) Dryad Ward - aged 68
- Elsie Devine (died 21/11/99) Dryad Ward - aged 88
- Sheila Gregory (died 22/11/1999) Dryad Ward - aged 91

The inquests are scheduled for six weeks from 18th March 2009 and ten separate verdicts will be delivered at the close of proceedings. The coroner is AM Bradley, HM Assistant Deputy Coroner Portsmouth and South East. The inquests will take place at Portsmouth Combined Court, Winston Churchill Avenue, Portsmouth.

Organisational Structure

- Portsmouth Healthcare NHS Trust managed the Department of Medicine for Elderly People from April 1994 until March 2002 when it was dissolved. Portsmouth Healthcare NHS Trust (a predecessor of PCTs and a separate organisation from Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust).
- In April 2002 responsibility for the services transferred to Fareham and Gosport PCT and East Hampshire PCT.
- In April 2006 responsibility for Dryad and Daedalus wards and the employment of the nursing and medical staff transferred to Division of Medicine for Older People (DMOP) at Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust.
- At the same time nursing staff on Sultan Ward transferred to Hampshire PCT and Hampshire Partnership NHS Trust took over responsibility for Older People's Mental Health Services in Ark Royal and Collingwood wards.