

GOSPORT: Hearing continues into the death of hospital patient



HEARING: Gosport War Memorial Hospital where 91-year-old Gladys Richards, inset, died after being admitted to recover from a broken hip.

Doctors disagree over use of drugs

TWO doctors have clashed over whether the correct pain relief drugs were given to a Hampshire pensioner who died in hospital.

Gladys Richards, 91, passed away at Gosport War Memorial Hospital 15 years ago having been admitted to recover from a broken hip.

An inquest heard how Mrs Richards had been given a more powerful form of morphine.

One expert witness said it had been appropriate while another said it had a role in speeding up her death.

Mrs Richards, who lived at a Lee-on-the-Solent nursing home, died on August 21 1998 while under the care of Dr Jane Barton.

Dr Richard Reid, a consultant then at Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth, said, on the basis of medical guidelines and that Mrs Richards was described in the medical notes as still in pain, the dose given to Mrs Richards "feels entirely appropriate".

He said Mrs Richards' survival for a further four days after it was adminis-

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tered told him that increasing the dosage was "unlikely to have been responsible for her demise".

However, Professor Robin Ferner, a consultant physician and clinical pharmacologist from Birmingham University, told the Portsmouth inquest that while it was right to ensure that patients were not in pain, it might have been achieved with "substantially lower doses".

Prof Ferner said it was "very likely" that giving diamorphine by injection alongside other drugs "rendered Mrs Richards too drowsy to take oral fluids, increased the risk of her developing renal failure and hastened her death".

He said he also found it difficult to explain, given the absence in the records, why there had been a switch from oral to injected medication.

He said Mrs Richards's care was standard palliative care, but he said the difficulty was knowing whether the decision that she was terminally ill was the right one.

Prof Ferner was one of a number of experts who were consulted by Hampshire Police in 2002 as part of their investigation into a number of deaths at the Gosport hospital.

The inquest heard he had concluded that Mrs Richards' death, one of 86 he looked into, was by natural causes although her care had been substandard.

The hearing into Mrs Richards' death follows an inquest in 2009 that recorded verdicts that drugs had been a factor in the deaths of five other patients at

Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

Her daughter, Gillian MacKenzie, has campaigned tirelessly to get an inquest into her mother's death.

Proceeding



Dr Jane Barton.