

Professor R Ferner  
West Midlands Centre For Adverse  
Drug Reaction Reporting  
City Hospital  
Dudley Road  
West Midlands  
B18 7QH

New Kings Court, Tollgate, Chandler's Ford  
Eastleigh, Hampshire SO53 3LG

DX: 155850 Eastleigh 7

**Code A**

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Our Ref: 558203/000001/JCW/RICHARD/HP

Your Ref:

Dear Professor Ferner

**Re: Gladys Richards (deceased)**

I write further to recommendation of Professor Forrest, Professor of pathology. Recently he has been appointed as a Coroner and suggested that you may be able to help us with this case.

I would be very grateful if you can indicate if you would be prepared to accept our instructions to prepare a report dealing with causation issues primarily and also give evidence at the forthcoming Inquest in this case which is due to take place between 5 and 13 December 2012. We anticipate that the experts will be giving evidence on 12 December 2012.

The Inquest concerns the death of Gladys Richards (deceased) an elderly lady who was in her late eighties. She died in 1998 at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital whilst under the care of Dr Jane Barton, clinical assistant. You may be aware that there has been a series of cases investigated by the Police at Gosport War Memorial Hospital and ten cases were subject to an Inquest hearing in March/ April 2009. Subsequently there was a General Medical Council hearing which found Dr Barton guilty of serious professional misconduct in relation to overuse of opiate and tranquilliser medications in frail elderly people. It seems most of the deaths took place in the late 1990s.

The late Mrs Richards was being cared for in a nursing home. Unfortunately she sustained a fractured hip. She was admitted to Haslar hospital and had surgical fixation. She was transferred to Gosport War Memorial Hospital for rehabilitation, however the hip dislocated. She was therefore transferred back to Haslar Hospital and had the dislocated hip reduced under anaesthetic. On return to Gosport War Memorial Hospital she was supposed to have rehabilitation. However she was commenced on a subcutaneous morphine pump very quickly on her arrival there and died several days later. The evidence from the Commission for Healthcare Improvement report in 2003 and from the General Medical Council is that the prescribing was inappropriate and not in the patients' best interests.

I need to ask you in this individual case to consider whether or not the prescribing was appropriate and then crucially, did the inappropriate prescribing cause or contribute in a significant way for the timing of the late Mrs Richards' death.

Families of the victims in Gosport consider that Dr Barton's acts were criminal. It may be that her prescribing was reckless as to the safety of her patients.

The Coroner has been very strict about the papers which he will currently permit to be entered into the Inquest. In particular there is a report from Professor Black which concludes that the late Mrs Richards would have died in any event. We do however have reports from Professor Ford and Professor Livesley which conclude that the late Mrs Richards' life was shortened by the prescribing regime. Those latter two experts were instructed by the Police but the Coroner will only accept a wholly independent expert coming into the case to review matters for the Inquest listed in December 2012.

If you are able to help, I can forward you the more detailed letter of instruction so that you could consider the cost and timescale. I can then forward copies of the Inquest documents to you for consideration. The paperwork is not voluminous by the standards of most cases.

Please can you forward a copy to me of your curriculum vitae so that I can discuss your instruction with the daughter of the deceased. We are instructed by Mrs Gillian Mackenzie. She will be giving evidence at the Inquest, as will her sister Mrs Lesley O'Brien.

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible and hope that you can help.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

**John White**