

Investigation into the Portsmouth Healthcare
NHS Trust

Gosport War Memorial Hospital

JULY 2002

Executive summary

CHI has undertaken this investigation as a result of concerns expressed by the police and others around the care and treatment of frail older people provided by Portsmouth Healthcare NHS Trust at Gosport War Memorial Hospital. This follows police investigations between 1998 and 2001 into the potential unlawful killing of a patient in 1998. As part of their investigations, the police commissioned expert medical opinion, which was made available to CHI, relating to a total of five patient deaths in 1998. In February 2002, the police decided not to proceed with further investigations.

Based on information gathered during their investigations, the police were sufficiently concerned about the care of older people at Gosport War Memorial Hospital to share their concerns with CHI in August 2001. CHI is grateful to the Hampshire Constabulary for sharing information with us which contributed towards the local and national recommendations CHI makes to improve the care of this vulnerable group of NHS patients.

CHI has conducted a detailed review of the systems in place to ensure good quality patient care. CHI does not have a statutory remit to investigate either the circumstances around any particular death or the conduct of any individual.

Key conclusions

CHI concludes that a number of factors, detailed in the report, contributed to a failure of trust systems to ensure good quality patient care:

- there were insufficient local prescribing guidelines in place governing the prescription of powerful pain relieving and sedative medicines
- the lack of a rigorous, routine review of pharmacy data led to high levels of prescribing on wards caring for older people not being questioned
- the absence of adequate trust wide supervision and appraisal systems meant that poor prescribing practice was not identified
- there was a lack of thorough multidisciplinary total patient assessment to determine care needs on admission

CHI also concludes that the trust now has adequate policies and guidelines in place which are being adhered to governing the prescription and administration of pain relieving medicines to older patients.