

 **Code A**
05/04/2001 16:49

Sent by: Karen Robinson/SERO

To:
cc:

Code A

Subject: Gosport War Memorial Hospital

Code A

I have attached a summary of the position, as background information, although as we discussed, we do not need to brief Ministers in this level of detail at this stage. I have copious papers from the Trust if you need any more information.

Regards

Code A



Briefing note GWMH deaths 050401.

Briefing note: SUI "Suspicious deaths" at Gosport War Memorial Hospital (Portsmouth Healthcare NHS Trust)

1. Background

- 1.1 The Portsmouth News ran a story on 3rd April about Mrs Gladys Richards, a 91 year old woman who died in Gosport War Memorial Hospital (GWMH) in 1998. Following allegations by Mrs Edwards' daughter, Mrs Gillian Mackenzie, a police investigation was held and the outcome of that investigation is currently with the CPS who will decide whether or not a case will be brought.
- 1.2 Mrs Mackenzie made a complaint to the Police Complaints Authority about the initial police investigation, which concluded there was no case to answer. Her complaint was upheld and two Hampshire policemen were disciplined for investigatory failures. A second investigation was carried out and a report sent to the CPS.
- 1.3 As a result of the News article two more relatives of different patients have approached the press with concerns about the care of their elderly relatives at GWMH.
- 1.4 The article implies that the police may be checking "hundreds" of other cases at the hospital. This is untrue. To date no similar complaints have been made to the police, although the Trust has received information that at least one other complaint may be made.
- 1.5 There are some common factors between the cases but there is no reason to believe at present that this is more than coincidence.

2. Mrs Gladys Richards

- 2.1 Mrs Richards was admitted to GWMH from Haslar Hospital for rehabilitation post fractured neck of femur on 11th August 1998. Her condition deteriorated after a fall on the ward on 13th August and she died on 21st August. A complaint was made by her daughter, Mrs Lack, about standards of care At GWMH, including delay in sending Mrs R for an x-ray at Haslar (this happened the next day) and the decision to provide pain relief only rather than active treatment.
- 2.2 The Trust investigated the complaint and apologised for the delay in sending Mrs R for x-ray. The Trust felt that the decision not to intervene surgically was taken with the full involvement of the family at the time.
- 2.3 The family was unhappy with the outcome of the Trust investigation and a second daughter, Mrs McKenzie, took her concerns to the police.

2.4 Lines to take:

- The Trust is aware of the police investigation and has co-operated fully.
- This is the only case at GWMH being investigated by the police.
- Unable to comment further while the case is with the Crown Prosecution service.

3. Code A

3.1 Code A contacted the News about Code A death at GWMH in 1998, after the original article appeared. Shortly after her death, he raised a complaint with the Trust, which was eventually referred to the Health Service Ombudsman.

3.2 The Ombudsman concluded in his report, published on 22nd March 2001, that *"I have not found evidence of unsatisfactory medical or nursing care and I am satisfied that Code A was not given excessive doses of morphine. I do not uphold the complaint."*

3.3 The only criticism of the Trust upheld by the ombudsman was for an error relating to the microfilming of some nursing records. This was acknowledged by the Trust during the initial investigation and an apology given to Code A

3.4 Code A was under the care of the same consultant as Mrs Richards, although the consultant, Dr Lord, did not actually see Mrs Richards at any time during her stay as she was on leave. There is no evidence in either case that any member of the medical or nursing staff acted inappropriately.

3.5 Lines to take:

- Code A complaint has been investigated fully by the Health Service Ombudsman who did **not** uphold the complaint.
- If the police wish to pursue an investigation into Code A allegations, the Trust will co-operate fully.

Mr J Williamson

4.1 The Trust has received notification today (5th April) of an approach to the News by a Mr Ian Williamson over the death of his father Jack Williamson at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in September 2000. There were no complaints raised by the family with the Trust at the time of Mr Williamson's death or at any stage during his care. Mr Williamson has apparently told the press that he intends to go to the police with his concerns.

4.2 Mr Jack Williamson was admitted on 29th August 2000 and died on 18th September. He suffered from a hereditary vascular condition, which

had resulted in the amputation of both legs. His son suffers from the same condition His wife, Ivy, died on the same ward at GWMH about 5 weeks before from cancer. The family has no complaints about the circumstances of her death.

4.3 Lines to take:

- The Trust has never received a complaint about any aspect of Mr Williamson's care.
- Trust is very happy to discuss any concerns with Mr Williamson's family.

5. Common Factors

- 5.1 **Consultant** – all three patients were under the care of Dr Lord, although Dr Lord never saw Mrs Richards.
- 5.2 **Clinical Assistant** – Dr Barton, a local GP, was involved in the care of both Mrs Richards and Code A Pending the outcome of the CPS decision, there is no reason to believe currently that any member of staff behaved inappropriately. A second consultant and the Health Service Ombudsman reviewed Code A care and both were satisfied that prescribing was appropriate.
- 5.3 **Age and medical condition** – Code A and Mrs Richards were both 91 year old ladies admitted to GWMH from RHH post surgery for fractured neck of femur.
- 5.4 **Nature of complaint** – both complaints raised concerns about pain and pain relief.
- 5.5 As there has been no formal complaint about Mr Williamson's care it is not yet known what specifically is the family's concern.
- 5.6 **Lines to take;**
- reiterate lines above – only case being investigated by police is Mrs Richards, cannot comment on that.