

Source: <http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/local/dr-jane-barton-gave-patients-drugs-to-keep-quiet-1-1233517>

Dr Jane Barton gave patients drugs to 'keep quiet'

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An elderly patient of a doctor accused of over-prescribing painkillers and sedatives was dosed up with opiates to 'keep quiet', a disciplinary panel heard today.

Dr Jane Barton is accused of allowing high doses of medication to be given to 12 patients, levels which were 'inappropriate' and potentially dangerous.

Representing the General Medical Council (GMC) Tom Kark told the Fitness to Practise Panel that it was a 'matter of course' to give patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital (GWMH) in Hampshire high doses of opiates.

He said: 'The prescription of very large doses of opiates appears to have become a matter of course at the GWMH for the patients under Dr Barton's care.'

Mr Kark added: 'The patients were overdosed so much with opiates that they became unresponsive.'

Dr Barton's treatment of 12 patients is under investigation, all of them died at the hospital.

Continuing the opening of the GMC's case today, Mr Kark detailed the treatment of Arthur Cunningham, 79, who was admitted to the hospital in September 1998.

In an allegedly common pattern, he was given larger and larger doses of opiate painkillers with what expert witness Professor Gary Ford said were 'inappropriate and reckless' prescriptions.

Robert Wilson, 74, was prescribed paracetamol and codeine as required at one hospital, but when he arrived at the GWMH was given much stronger oral doses of morphine.

Relatives described him as being left in an 'almost paralysed state' by a cocktail of painkillers and sedatives, and this was despite liver damage caused by heavy drinking.

Mr Kark told the panel: 'The use of opiates in patients with liver disease as a result of alcoholism is to be carefully monitored and preferably not used unless required to deal with severe pain.'

Professor Ford said the medication was likely to have caused respiratory problems which contributed to his death.

Another patient Enid Spurgeon, 92, was given opiates despite having suffered hallucinations when she was given morphine at another hospital.

She was given diamorphine and anti-epileptic drug Midazolam despite already being 'very drowsy' from oral doses of morphine.

Doctors failed to examine why she was in pain and instead gave her ever-larger doses of painkillers, Mr Kark said.

Geoffrey Packman, 67, was 'spaced out' during his stay at the hospital, according to his daughter Victoria.

Shortly after his admission to GWMH for rehabilitation and recuperation Dr Barton allegedly told his wife Bessie that he was going to die.

Mr Kark said: 'It's important to note that this patient was not dying nor was he expected to die prior to being admitted to the ward.'

Elsie Devine was admitted with confusion and kidney problems, and was at times aggressive towards staff.

She was given an opiate painkiller patch to 'calm her' and later doses of diamorphine and Midazolam despite there being no record of her suffering pain.

On top of this the 88-year-old was given a tranquiliser when she became agitated.

Mr Kark said: 'This regime of opiate medication has, according to (Professor Ford) every appearance of being given to keep the patient quiet.'

The final patient's case under investigation is Jean Stevens, 73, who died following a stroke in May 1999.

Again it is alleged that she was given increasing doses of opiates which were 'inappropriate'.

Source: <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Prescription+'left+elderly+in+comas'.-a0201462515>

Prescription 'left elderly in comas'.

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Elderly patients were left in "drug-induced comas" after being over-prescribed painkillers and sedatives, a disciplinary panel heard.

Dr Jane Barton is accused of a series of failings in her treatment of 12 patients at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital in Hampshire between January 1996 and November 1999. Representing the General Medical Council, Tom Kark said the wards on which she worked provided longer-term care for elderly patients who expected to be rehabilitated and sent home.

Many had never been given opiates before, but Dr Barton wrote prescriptions for drugs, including diamorphine which allowed nursing staff to massively increase dosage if they saw fit.

Mr Kark said: "There was, we say, a series of failures which led to patients being unnecessarily anaesthetised." Some patients were medicated so heavily they were in comas, he told the panel..