

Source: <http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/local/i-quit-over-prescription-of-drugs-says-nurse-1-1236832>

I quit over prescription of drugs, says nurse

09:19 Friday 26 June 2009 16:27 Thursday 25 June 2009

A senior nurse quit her job at a hospital because she disagreed with the large doses of potentially lethal painkillers prescribed to elderly patients.

Shirley Holman spent two years at Gosport War Memorial Hospital but left because she felt she was being harassed by a doctor and her ward sister.

Mrs Holman told a hearing in London that she had launched the hospital's official grievance procedure against Dr Jane Barton and Sister Gill Hamblin.

Dr Barton, who is also a Gosport GP, is alleged to be guilty of serious professional misconduct in relation to the care, treatment and death of 12 elderly patients at the Bury Road hospital in the 1990s.

ADVERTISING

Allegations include whether starting doses of the painkiller diamorphine – a form of heroin and the sedative midazolam she prescribed – were too high.

At the hearing yesterday, Mrs Holman, the deputy ward manager on the hospital's Dryad ward from 1998 to 2000, said she had 'reached the end of her tether'.

She told the hearing she considered patients were hooked up to syringe drivers – a way of delivering diamorphine intravenously when patients could not eat or drink – too early and that doses of strong painkillers were too high. She said: 'I would often go home after a day shift leaving patients who could eat and drink.

'But when I came back the next day I would find them on a syringe driver – patients I would not have expected to be on syringe drivers because when I left them they were eating and drinking.'

She said she had complained to her bosses about syringe drivers being introduced too soon in a patient's stay at the hospital.

'I would say that most of the time patients had the words 'syringe driver' written up in their notes as soon as they were admitted to the hospital.

'To sometimes double or increase by a third the doses in the syringe drivers seemed to be quite a lot to me and the change in the patient seemed quite dramatic,' she told the GMC panel.

Mrs Holman admitted that the use of the drivers was sometimes the best way to treat pain, but she thought too many patients were put on them as soon as they arrived at the hospital.

Under cross-examination by Timothy Langdale QC, representing Dr Barton, Mrs Holman admitted that in her grievance letter she mentioned neither the use of the drivers nor what she considered to be excessive drug doses.

(Proceeding)

ONLY GP INVESTIGATED

Dr Jane Barton was the only doctor investigated in relation to the death of 92 elderly patients at Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

The GP – who is a partner at Forton Medical Centre in Whites Place, Gosport – was clinical assistant and in charge of the day-to-day running of now defunct Dryad and Daedalus wards at the Bury Road site until her resignation in July 2000.

A damning report published by the then Commission for Health Improvement in 2002 found patients were being put at risk.

The deaths were the subject of three inquiries by Hampshire police and a probe by the Crown Prosecution Service – which decided in November 2006 that no charges would be brought.