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Lib Dem gives his backing to call for deaths inquiry

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AN EASTBOURNE woman fighting a case of alleged medical malpractice in the death of her mother has taken her case to Parliament.

Gillian MacKenzie, of Code A presented her case to Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary of State for Health Norman Lamb MP.

She is one of a number of alleged victim's families taking action against Gosport War Memorial Hospital.

Mrs MacKenzie wants a public inquiry into the death of her mother Gladys Richards in 1998 while she was under the care of clinical assistant Jane Barton.

In September the General Medical Council found Dr Barton guilty of widely prescribing powerful painkillers and sedatives to elderly residents at the hospital over a number of years, including to Gillian Mackenzie's mother. The GMC said that Dr Barton's actions were "inappropriate, hazardous and not in the best interests of the patients".

The families say they want justice for their relatives.

The meeting was organised by the Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate in Eastbourne Stephen Lloyd to enable Mrs Mackenzie, other alleged victims' families affected and their lawyer John White to put their case to Mr Lamb and the reasons why they believe things had gone badly wrong in the past at the Hampshire hospital.

Mrs MacKenzie said, "I felt the meeting with Norman Lamb was a really important milestone in what has been for me, at times, a long and lonely struggle for justice. Ever since 1998 when my mother died, I believe in suspicious circumstances, at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital, I and the other families have been fighting for our case to be heard. My profound concerns at what went on at the hospital demand answers from the statutory bodies."

Mrs MacKenzie, who has lived in Eastbourne for more than 20 years, has been campaigning for justice ever since she first raised concerns about the care her mother was receiving at the hospital when she was admitted on August 11 1998, just ten days before she died.

She said, "When my mother was admitted to Gosport War Memorial Hospital, I soon noticed that the care offered to her was focused around strong, morphine-based painkillers, which I later discovered were totally unnecessary for my mother's condition, and in my opinion brought on an unnecessarily early death."

A medical expert who later reviewed the case on behalf of the Hampshire police enquiry commented that, "Dr Jane Barton prescribed the drugs Diamorphine, Haloperidol, Midazolam and Hyoscine for Mrs Gladys Richards in a manner as to cause her death", and that "as a result of being given these drugs, Mrs MacKenzie's mother, Mrs Richards, was unlawfully killed".

Stephen Lloyd said, "When Mrs MacKenzie first came to me about six months ago it soon became clear that a great injustice has been done to Mrs MacKenzie's mother and the parents and grandparents of the other families, so I was determined to do all that it takes to help them. Giving them an opportunity to meet with Norman Lamb and present their case is, I hope, a positive step toward righting this wrong."

Norman Lamb MP added, "This whole case is absolutely shocking. It has dragged on for years, been passed backwards and forwards from the GMC, the NHS, the police and the Crown Prosecution Service. At last in March of this year the GMC held its inquest – 11 years after Mrs MacKenzie first alerted the authorities – and have found there is a case to answer for the doctor concerned, Dr Barton. I am asking that there be a public inquiry as a matter of urgency and will be applying as much pressure as I am able to ensure this happens."