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Staff relieved over hospital verdict



Dr Jane Barton



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A FORMER colleague of one of the medical staff involved in the probe into hospital deaths has spoken of his relief that she has emerged with her reputation intact.

Dr Philip Gray described Dr Jane Barton, pictured below, as a 'caring GP' and said that the investigations into deaths at the hospital would have made her life difficult over the past eight years.

Dr Gray, who is now retired, hired Dr Barton when she first came to Gosport. She still works as a GP at his old practice in Forton.

Yesterday The News reported how the Crown Prosecution Service decided there was no evidence of gross negligence in the deaths of 10 patients at War Memorial Hospital, in Gosport.

The cases were the last of 92 that had been investigated following complaints from people that elderly relatives had been given excessive doses of strong painkillers.

Only 10 of them, though, were forwarded to the CPS, which had to decide whether to carry out any prosecutions.

At least one of the complaints had been against Dr Barton, who was clinical assistant at the hospital in 1998 and in day-to-day charge of medical care until she left in July 2000.

But, Paul Close, the reviewing lawyer in the Special Crime Division of the CPS, said they were not taking the cases any further because no evidence had been revealed showing that an offence had been committed.

Dr Gray, 73, said he knew Dr Barton very well, adding: 'It is obviously very upsetting to somebody who was a caring GP to have these allegations made.'

'I am sure it must have made life very difficult indeed over the years.'

He added: 'She is an excellent doctor and her reputation has now come out of this intact as it should have done.'

'I only hope we have heard the last of this now.'

Although, the police investigation has now come to an end, the files have been passed on to the General Medical Council.

The GMC will now look at the conduct of some staff at Gosport War Memorial.

But a nurse who used to work at the hospital told The News the end of the criminal investigation would be a great relief for her former colleagues.

She told how staff had to put up with taunts from some visitors throughout the investigations, which first began in 1998.

She told how hospital bosses had to call a crisis meeting to advise nurses and staff to ignore it.

The nurse, who left the hospital in April and would not be named, said: 'People would ask if you were one of the nurses who killed the patients.'

'They said people came to our hospital to die.'

'People just assumed that there couldn't be all that smoke if there was no fire.'

'The morale was low – it is not nice as a nurse to hear that sort of thing. They had a meeting and we were just told to ignore it.'

'But we all stuck together. We knew that we had not done anything wrong.'

'I am sure there must be enormous relief in the hospital this week.'

Dr Gray added: 'The reputation of the entire hospital has emerged intact. Gosport is very lucky to have this hospital and that should be the end of it.'

Dr Barton was approached at her home by The News but refused to comment. Staff at Forton Medical Centre also refused to comment.

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