

Client: Hampshire Primary Care Trust - 4007152-0002

Matter: Gosport Inquests (Joint Instruction)

Date of Attendance: 3 December 2008

Fee Earner: [REDACTED]

Note of a meeting at QA Hospital, Portsmouth. Meeting to discuss preliminary media arrangements.

In attendance: Michael Goodleave MG (PR, [REDACTED] PCT)
 Emma Topping ET (PR, PHD)
 Mary Deeks MD
 Betty Woodlands BW (RCN)
 Julie Dean JD (Trimedia)
 [REDACTED]

The main points of the meeting:

- 1 [REDACTED] went through the main criticisms in the evidence provided by the coroner. [REDACTED] pointed out that a full note of these criticisms would be available at the forthcoming steering group meeting.
- 2 It was pointed out that despite the views of the experts, the main criticism is likely to come from the families who regard this as a case of 'euthanasia' as far as their relations are concerned.
- 3 It was agreed and discussed that the main focus is likely to be Dr Barton but some of the nurses may feel vulnerable and may be criticised in court.
- 4 [REDACTED] advised that the purpose of the inquest was essentially to find out "how" people met their death. There were a number of various options, as far as the coroner was concerned, including accidental death, natural causes and possibly open verdicts. It was agreed the families are unlikely to be satisfied with the outcome of this process and that would also be a problem as far as media relations are concerned. There was nothing the Trust could do about this and [REDACTED] advised as to why every inquest was being held (in view of the order of the Secretary of State) and that although questioning by the coroner may stray into technically irrelevant areas it is unlikely that the outcome will bring an end to the family's criticisms.
- 5 Concerns were expressed that members of nursing staff have felt 'under siege' by the media when this matter was raised. It was agreed that staff will be reassured as to the process and that the media would be managed as far as possible.
- 6 It was discussed that in order to bring media onside and to assist the staff and the hospital as well, it may be possible to organise a pre-hearing briefings and possibly a 'tour' of the hospital for local reporters and media involved. It was also agreed that it may be possible to arrange facilities for media to be present on or near the grounds of the hospital to assist them in their reporting role. It was hoped that the 'management' of media in this regard might assist us in the process.
- 7 A discussion took place in respect of the motivation of the families and it was thought that they were seeking to 'achieve heads on a plate'. [REDACTED] outlined the difficulties

with this and the problem that they are unlikely to achieve this and that a clinical negligence claim is unlikely to follow. A discussion took place with regard to the legal representation of the families and the effect that that has on them. It was noted that the families were originally encouraged into some form of action group by Ann Alexander. She was no longer advising the families and it was unclear as to the financial arrangements which were funding their representation (subsequently discovered to be AvMA)

- 8 Various issues regarding the clinical care were also discussed and it was noted that although the prescriptions for the drug was between 20 to 200mg, in fact there was no evidence that patients were ever given 400mg or anything about 40mg. Betty pointed out this evidence was available from the controlled drugs book. A discussion took place as to the role of palliative care and perhaps a misunderstanding in respect of the families that their relations were (it was thought by and large) being treated in a terminal phase of illness. It was noted that many of those that died were very old and some in excess of 80-100 years of age. It was agreed that some form of briefing should include not only a context to this matter (as outlined in Lesley Humprey's statement) but also the background to the hospital and to the role of the ward's palliative care.
- 9 We noted that Dr Barton was due to retire in October although it was uncertain as to whether she had actually retired. It was noted that she was to attend for the GMC next summer.
- 10 It was agreed that Trimedia would assist in the presentation at the QA hospital for staff the next day and at the appropriate briefings an advice would follow.