

Doctor 'will be blamed for hundreds of patient deaths'

Greg Hurst

A report this week is expected to attribute dozens of deaths of elderly patients to a doctor who prescribed them fatal overdoses of painkillers.

Jane Barton, 69, a retired GP, was working at Gosport War Memorial Hospital near Portsmouth in the 1990s when the deaths occurred.

On Wednesday James Jones, the former Bishop of Liverpool, will publish the findings of a panel that has examined 833 death certificates signed by Dr Barton and the actions of other health professionals who worked with her.

Police previously examined 92 deaths of former patients of Dr Barton, many of whom were given injections of diamorphine, an opiate painkiller, on her instructions. No charges were brought.

The new inquiry is not expected to refer its findings to police or the Crown Prosecution Service, saying this was not within its remit.

Bereaved families will be told of the panel's findings in a closed session at Portsmouth cathedral. Jeremy Hunt, the health and social care secretary, is

expected to make a statement to the House of Commons.

Former patients of Dr Barton included Elsie Devine, 88, whose death in 1999 was partly due to opiate drugs, an inquest found. Her granddaughter, Bridget Reeves, said: "My seven-stone grandmother, who did not have dementia and was recovering from a kidney infection, was pinned to the



Dr Jane Barton is accused of prescribing fatal doses of painkillers

floor by four nurses and given enough drugs to lay out a 6ft violent man."

● A team of medical examiners will conduct extra inspections on deaths to try to uncover criminality or medical malpractice. It follows concerns that the death certification process does not provide enough independent scrutiny. Of the 490,791 deaths in England in 2016, only 90,404 were investigated by a postmortem or coroner's inquest.

TIMES 16.6.18