

Retired GP accused over deaths faces call for prosecution

Doctor expected to be named as responsible for shortening lives following £13m investigation

By Luke Heighton

A RETIRED GP accused of being behind “hundreds of deaths” of patients at a Gosport hospital should be prosecuted if found to be responsible, the MP of one of the victims has argued.

Dr Jane Barton, 69, has been accused of prescribing deadly doses of diamorphine – a powerful opiate painkiller – to patients when she worked at the hospital near Portsmouth in the Nineties.

The doctor is expected to be named as the person responsible for the shortening of possibly “hundreds” of lives, following a £13million investigation, according to a report in *The Sunday Times*.

Inquests in 2009 and 2013 into 11 of the deaths ruled that medication prescribed by Dr Barton had contributed to six patients dying. She was found guilty of “multiple instances of serious professional misconduct” by the General Medical Council in 2010 but was not struck off and soon retired.

Much of the evidence at the fitness to practise panel concerned her “brusque, unfriendly and indifferent” manner, her “intransigence and worrying lack of insight” into the effects of her actions and her inability to “recognise the limits of her professional competence”.

After reports that Dr Barton would be named on Wednesday, Stephen Lloyd, the Eastbourne MP – a supporter of Gillian McKenzie, 84, whose mother Gladys Richards died suddenly in 1998 after she was transferred to the Gosport War Memorial Hospital following a hip operation – told *The Daily Telegraph*: “If this is true, not only would I expect charges to be brought, I will lobby for it actively in parliament. I



Dr Jane Barton, right, is accused of prescribing deadly doses of diamorphine. Her former patients who died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital include, from top, Elsie Devine, Gladys Richards and Robert Wilson

will be tabling an early day motion the following day and pushing very, very hard for criminal charges, if the report is as suggested,” the Liberal Democrat frontbencher added.

The independent government panel was led by James Jones, the former bishop of Liverpool and chairman of the Hillsborough Inquiry into the deaths of 96 football fans in 1989. It examined 833 death certificates signed by Dr Barton during the period when she worked at the hospital.

The number of people who died under suspicious circumstances is expected to exceed the 92 cases already looked at by police, whose previous investigation left a number of “unanswered questions” and led to

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The number of death certificates signed by Dr Jane Barton that were examined by an independent government panel

accusations of a cover-up. It is not suggested that Dr Barton is guilty of murder, and she declined to comment when contacted by *The Telegraph*.

Healthcare workers who may have acted on Dr Barton’s alleged instructions have also been drawn into the inquest, *The Sunday Times* claimed.

A source close to the inquiry told reporters that Dr Barton would not be referred to the police or the Crown Prosecution Service. It came as Dori Graham, 86, told the newspaper that her husband, Leonard, was killed after receiving care from Barton and a fatal injection.

Mr Jones will inform the families of the results of his investigation in a closed session at Portsmouth Cathedral on Wednesday. Theresa May is expected to refer to the finding during Prime Minister’s Questions the same day, with Jeremy Hunt, the Health Secretary, expected to give a statement.

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