

# Nurse 'admits' killing 22 pensioner patients

## Japan

**Bernard Lagan**

A Japanese nurse arrested for the suspected murder of 22 elderly patients has said she arranged for them to die after her shifts ended so she did not have to deal with their "nuisance" relatives.

Ayumi Kuboki, 31, is reported to have told police that she poisoned only patients who she thought were close to death at the Oguchi hospital in Yokohama in 2016.

According to Japanese media, she confessed to killing two men as well as injecting an anti-septic chemical into the intravenous bags of at least 20 other patients. The former nurse told police that she did so in the hope they would die when she was off duty because she found talking to distraught relatives a burden. "It would have been a nuisance if that responsibility fell on me," *The Asahi Shimbun* newspaper reported her as saying.

Despite Ms Kuboki's claims, police have discovered that some patients had not been close to death.

She was arrested on Saturday over the death of Sozo Nishikawa, 88, who died on September 18, 2016, after anti-septic was added to his drip. Nobuo

Yamaki, 88, who shared a hospital room with Mr Nishikawa, died two days later.

The hospital became suspicious after a nurse saw bubbles in Mr Yamaki's intravenous drip, the *Asahi Shimbun* reported. It was found to contain the disinfectant benzalkonium chloride. A blood test later revealed that Mr Nishikawa also had the toxic cleaning agent in his system.

Police are investigating other deaths that occurred around the same period.

Prosecutors have more than two weeks in which to decide whether to charge Ms Kuboki, left. She had worked as a nurse since 2008 and joined Oguchi hospital in 2015. It has since been renamed Yokohama Hajime hospital.

The *Japan Times* reported that some 48 patients had died at the hospital over several months in 2016. The hospital has admitted having had a high death rate then. A hospital lawyer said that 46 other patients had died on the same floor from July 1 until late September that year. Ms Kuboki denied being responsible when asked about the deaths by Japanese television last year.

One hospital worker said: "She was the kind of person who was hard to work out what she was really thinking but she was considered competent."

