



**PRESS RELEASE**

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### **GOSPORT HOSPITAL INQUEST FAILS TO SATISFY FAMILIES**

The inquest verdicts on ten deaths which occurred in the late 1990's at Gosport War Memorial Hospital were announced today but failed to satisfy families involved in the inquests, and many more who have been denied an inquiry into their loved ones' deaths at the hospital. Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA) – the charity for patient safety and justice) has been providing support to some of the families. AvMA Chief Executive, Peter Walsh, said:

“It is now quite clear the refusal to hold a public inquiry was wrong. The inquests have raised more questions than they have answered. It was impossible to do justice to all ten deaths in one go and, in any case, there were other deaths at Gosport which should have been looked into as well as the role played by various agencies, which may have prevented the poor practise at Gosport or investigated promptly and appropriately. There are lessons here for other health scandals such as that at Stafford hospital. Only an independent public inquiry can get to the bottom of all the relevant issues”.

Amongst other things, AvMA are calling for a review of how powerful drugs like diamorphine ('opioids'), which were used in unusually large amounts at Gosport, are being issued in care settings such as community hospitals and nursing homes today. Last year the National Patient Safety Agency issued a patient safety alert over the use of opioids after receiving over 4,000 incident reports over their use, including at least five deaths. The use of opioids has increased dramatically in recent years.

AvMA has had its Freedom of Information request for release of the 'Baker report' into Gosport turned down by the Department of Health. This and other evidence which the families thought relevant was excluded from the inquest by the coroner.

AvMA has also criticised the system for funding legal representation for families at inquests. The charity used its influence to ensure some legal representation was available to families even if it had to be on a pro bono basis. Only at the very last moment was legal aid granted. Walsh added:

“Legal aid should be made much more accessible for families faced by inquests. If it were not for our efforts and the goodwill of Blake Laphorn solicitors, who are members of AvMA's Lawyers' Service, and of barristers from Outer Temple Chambers, it is likely that families would have faced this inquest with no legal representation at all”.

**ENDS**