

Gosport deaths and use of opioid medication

The findings of the Gosport Independent Panel are shocking, and will raise further concerns for patients, carers, and the wider population about the use of opioid medication. The Association for Palliative Medicine of Great Britain and Ireland would like to re-iterate the comments from The Right Reverend James Jones that the deaths were related to the administration of “dangerous doses of a hazardous combination of medication not clinically indicated or justified”.

Opioids are widely used within palliative care, and are uniquely effective in managing pain and other symptoms associated with cancer and non-malignant diseases. Side effects can occur, but these are usually manageable. Furthermore, appropriate prescribing, and continued monitoring, can usually prevent serious issues such as breathing problems and drug addiction. Importantly, research has shown that opioid medication does not shorten lives, and may even prolong lives due to good pain relief.

We would encourage patients that have concerns to continue to take their opioid medication, and to seek a timely review with the relevant healthcare professional to discuss their personal circumstances.

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