

Hospitals face closure for covering up medical mistakes after review into NHS trust where 1,200 died from neglect

- **Probe into deaths at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust**
- **Public inquiry will say trust run under culture of fear, bullying and secrecy**

By Daily Mail Reporter

Hospitals that cover up mistakes by staff should be fined or even closed, a public inquiry into one of Britain's worst medical scandals will recommend.

The report into the deaths of up to 1,200 patients at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust will paint a devastating picture of a health service run under a culture of fear, bullying and secrecy, according to The Sunday Times.

It is expected the document, which will be handed to the Government later this month, will say the trust attempted to stifle evidence of rising death rates among vulnerable patients, many of whom were denied enough food and drink in a pattern of continuous neglect.

In a bid to stop such a widespread tragedy happening again, Robert Francis QC, the inquiry chairman, will recommend a raft of initiatives.



Scandal: A public inquiry will recommend hospitals are fined or closed if they cover-up blunders in the wake of the tragedy at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, which was responsible for the deaths of up to 1,200 patients.

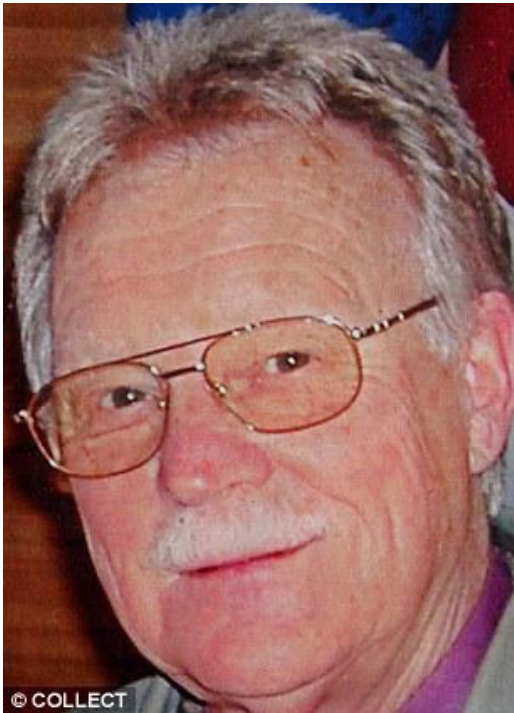
These will include a statutory 'duty of candour' that would force hospitals to admit if treatment has gone wrong or face fines or closure; obligatory training of all health workers, and measures to stop those who have been sacked from one job simply finding another; reform of recruitment to ensure not only are staff academically qualified but also have a willingness to offer care and compassion; and stronger patient representative bodies.

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The statutory 'duty of candour' goes further than recent proposals which were not legally binding. Peter Walsh, chief executive of Action Against Medical Accidents, told the paper: 'The government's proposal for a contractual duty of candour would relegate honesty with patients... to a standard clause between "commissioners" (groups of GPs) and "providers" (hospitals). 'Few people, if any, believe this would be enough to change the current culture of denial which pervades parts of the NHS.

'A duty of candour should be enshrined in the statutory "essential standards of quality and safety" which all healthcare providers need to meet to be registered with the Care Quality Commission, the NHS regulator.



Arthur Peacham, 68, (left) died of C.difficile at Stafford Hospital after being left on filthy wards. Joan Giles, 81, (right) died after suffering severe bed sores 'The Mid Staffordshire inquiry is likely to agree and it worries us the government is pre-empting the inquiry in an attempt to sidestep its recommendations and the pressure from patients' organisations for a statutory duty of candour.'

The inquiry will say NHS managers ignored or covered-up soaring death rates, with many patients were left in soiled sheets and denied adequate food and drink.

It will accuse bosses of trying to protect the reputation of trusts and competing with rival organisations, while the Department of Health was more concerned at the political consequences of the scandal rather than what caused it.'

Patient groups will study the findings closely, which are expected to reveal a combination of under-staffing and a gradual dehumanisation of patients from staff were factors in the scandal.