

‘71 dead at filthy hospital’



By CAROLINE GRANT and TOM NEWTON DUNN

FILTHY conditions at a major hospital may have led to up to 71 deaths, it was claimed yesterday.

An inspection by the Government's Care Quality Commission at Basildon Hospital, Essex, found blood on floors and curtains, and soiled mattresses.

A source at the hospital claims the conditions resulted in a marked rise in fatalities.

And today the chairman of **ANOTHER** hospital Foundation Trust was removed from his post over a second series of failings.

Hospital regulator Monitor used their powers to force Richard Bourne — chairman of Colchester Hospital University Foundation Trust — to step down over patient safety, leadership and waiting times.

A statement from Monitor said: "Regulatory action has been prompted by the trust's failure to comply with healthcare standards, its failure to exercise its functions effectively, efficiently and economically, and serious and wide-ranging concerns as to overall governance and leadership at the trust."

Government investigators had rated the Basildon University Hospital as "good" in October.

It received 13 out of 14 for cleanliness and five out of five for keeping the public healthy.

But then a new inspection team went into the Essex hospital unannounced... and discovered appalling conditions.

As well as blood on the curtains and floors, it was also splattered on trays used to carry equipment.

There were soiled mattresses with stains soaked through to the foam filling.

Suction machines were contaminated with fluid - with what looked like mould on parts.

The Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust was yesterday ordered to call in independent regulator Monitor.

Its chairman Dr William Moyes said they were intervening to ensure rapid improvement.

He said: "This use of our powers is needed to quickly deliver improvements."

The CQC report, revealed yesterday, described grim conditions.

It said: "We saw floors that were stained with blood.

"Six trays used by staff to carry equipment when they take blood samples or give injections had blood on them, a commode was soiled under the seat, and blood pressure cuffs were stained.

"In A&E we saw a trolley mattress with a hole in the cover; it was found to be badly soiled and to have a foul odour. In all, 12 mattresses were checked, 11 were stained."

There were also dust-covered blood pressure machines, out-of-date air tubes and A&E gear, and dirt in hospital bays.

Most of the inpatient care is provided at Basildon Hospital, which has 777 beds. Outpatient care is provided at Orsett.

The national average death rate for hospitals is 4.4 per cent, but at the Trust it hit 6.1 per cent - a total of 255 deaths for the number of patients admitted.

The statistics show that if the hospital met the national standard, 71 lives could have been saved.

A hospital source said: "The death rate in Basildon is well above average. It's clear 71 deaths could have been prevented."

Shadow Health Secretary Andrew Lansley said: "It is unforgivable if lives have been lost."

A spokesman for the hospital said it was an "extremely serious matter" with the safety of patients "our highest priority".