

## **The emotional impact on a nurse when their patient experiences a rapid response event is characterized by a complex interplay of emotions, often resulting in significant psychological distress**

Nurses frequently report feelings of frustration, regret, and a deep sense of responsibility for the patient's outcome, which can persist long after the event and may go unrecognized or untreated. These experiences can contribute to increased workplace stress and concerns about both mental and physical health, with some nurses describing lasting emotional and psychological effects.<sup>[1]</sup>

Additionally, involvement in acute patient deterioration or rapid response events is associated with secondary traumatic stress, emotional exhaustion, and symptoms akin to post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly when the event involves severe patient harm or death. The emotional burden is heightened by a sense of personal responsibility and is more pronounced in environments with high work demands and limited support structures. Nurses may also experience distress contagion, where individual emotional distress spreads among team members, potentially impairing team performance and well-being.<sup>[2-5]</sup>

Despite these challenges, some nurses find meaning and professional satisfaction in their ability to help deteriorating patients, though this is often counterbalanced by feelings of being overworked, undercompensated, and facing organizational barriers.<sup>[6-7]</sup> The literature underscores the importance of timely support, debriefing, and organizational strategies to mitigate these emotional impacts and promote nurse well-being.<sup>[2][4]</sup>

1. [Reflections From the Frontline of Nursing on Acute Patient Deterioration](#). Dresser S, Teel C, Peltzer J. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 2023;32(19-20):7560-7567. doi:10.1111/jocn.16843.

2. [Psychological Impact and Recovery After Involvement in a Patient Safety Incident: A Repeated Measures Analysis](#). Van Gerven E, Bruyneel L, Panella M, et al. *BMJ Open*. 2016;6(8):e011403. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2016-011403.

3. [Patient-Related Stressful Situations and Stress-Related Outcomes in Emergency Nurses: A Cross-Sectional Study on the Role of Work Factors and Recovery During](#)

[Leisure Time](#). de Wijn AN, van der Doef MP. International Journal of Nursing Studies. 2020;107:103579. doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2020.103579.

4. [Secondary Traumatic Stress in the Emergency Department](#). Morrison LE, Joy JP. Journal of Advanced Nursing. 2016;72(11):2894-2906. doi:10.1111/jan.13030.

5. [Stressful Intensive Care Unit Medical Crises: How Individual Responses Impact on Team Performance](#). Piquette D, Reeves S, LeBlanc VR. Critical Care Medicine. 2009;37(4):1251-5. doi:10.1097/CCM.0b013e31819c1496.

6. [Balancing Responsibilities, Rewards and Challenges: A Qualitative Study Illuminating the Complexity of Being a Rapid Response Team Nurse](#). Bunkenborg G, Barfod O'Connell M, Jensen HI, Bucknall T. Journal of Clinical Nursing. 2022;31(23-24):3560-3572. doi:10.1111/jocn.16183.

7. [Rapid Response Team Nurses' Attitudes and Barriers to the Rapid Response System: A Multicentre Survey](#). Loisa E, Hoppu S, Hytönen SM, Tirkkonen J. Acta Anaesthesiologica Scandinavica. 2021;65(5):695-701. doi:10.1111/aas.13779.

---

**The use of centralized monitoring systems for early detection of patient deterioration can reduce the incidence of rapid response events and unplanned ICU admissions, which has the potential to alleviate some stress and emotional burden for bedside nurses by enabling earlier detection and intervention.**

Nurses generally perceive these systems as valuable safety nets that support communication, collaboration, and workflow efficiency; they report improved awareness, prioritization, and proactive care, which may reduce the sense of sole responsibility for escalation failures.<sup>[1-4][6]</sup>

While enhanced monitoring can support a more proactive approach and may relieve some of the emotional impact associated with missed or delayed recognition of deterioration, persistent sociocultural barriers—such as hierarchical structures, workload, and organizational culture—continue to contribute to nurse stress and emotional impact during patient deterioration events.<sup>[2-3][7-8]</sup>

1. [Effect of Continuous Wireless Vital Sign Monitoring on Unplanned ICU Admissions and Rapid Response Team Calls: A Before-and-After Study](#). Eddahchouri Y, Peelen RV, Koeneman M, et al. *British Journal of Anaesthesia*. 2022;128(5):857-863. doi:10.1016/j.bja.2022.01.036.
2. [NURSE-LED Proactive Rounding and Automatic Early-Warning Score Systems to Prevent Resuscitation Incidences Among Adults in Ward-Based Hospitalised Patients](#). Noguchi A, Yokota I, Kimura T, Yamasaki M. *Heliyon*. 2023;9(6):e17155. doi:10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e17155.
3. [Automated Rapid Response System Activation-Impact on Nurses' Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Recognising and Responding to Clinical Deterioration: Mixed-Methods Study](#). Chua WL, Wee LC, Lim JYG, et al. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 2023;32(17-18):6322-6338. doi:10.1111/jocn.16734.
4. [Enhanced Early Warning System Impact on Nursing Practice: A Phenomenological Study](#). Burns KA, Reber T, Theodore K, et al. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 2018;74(5):1150-1156. doi:10.1111/jan.13517.
5. [Nursing Implications of an Early Warning System Implemented to Reduce Adverse Events: A Qualitative Study](#). Braun EJ, Singh S, Penlesky AC, et al. *BMJ Quality & Safety*. 2022;31(10):716-724. doi:10.1136/bmjqs-2021-014498.

6. [How Do Nurses Use Early Warning Scoring Systems to Detect and Act on Patient Deterioration to Ensure Patient Safety? A Scoping Review.](#) Wood C, Chaboyer W, Carr P. International Journal of Nursing Studies. 2019;94:166-178.  
doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2019.03.012.

7. [Early Warning Systems and Rapid Response to the Deteriorating Patient in Hospital: A Realist Evaluation.](#) McGaughey J, O'Halloran P, Porter S, Trinder J, Blackwood B. Journal of Advanced Nursing. 2017;73(12):3119-3132.  
doi:10.1111/jan.13367.

8. [Early Warning Systems and Rapid Response to the Deteriorating Patient in Hospital: A Systematic Realist Review.](#) McGaughey J, O'Halloran P, Porter S, Blackwood B. Journal of Advanced Nursing. 2017;73(12):2877-2891.  
doi:10.1111/jan.13398.

9. [Frontline Nurses' Clinical Judgment in Recognizing, Understanding, and Responding to Patient Deterioration: A Qualitative Study.](#) Dresser S, Teel C, Peltzer J. International Journal of Nursing Studies. 2023;139:104436.  
doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2023.104436.