



8 RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO ACUTE DETERIORATION

This standard aims to ensure that acute deterioration in a patient's physical, mental or cognitive condition is recognised promptly and appropriate action is taken.

The new standard recognises that deterioration can occur at any time when a patient is in health care. It considers potential physical, mental and cognitive deterioration.

Why the standard is important

Recognising that a patient's condition is deteriorating and responding to their needs in an appropriate and timely way is an essential component of safe and high-quality care. Serious adverse events such as unexpected death and cardiac arrest often follow observable deterioration in a patient's condition.¹

Early identification of deterioration may improve outcomes and reduce the intervention required to stabilise patients whose condition deteriorates.²

There is evidence that the warning signs of clinical deterioration are not always identified or acted on appropriately.³ Factors that can contribute to a failure to recognise and respond to a deteriorating patient include lack of understanding of the signs and symptoms of deterioration, and lack of systems to respond to deterioration.

Systems to recognise deterioration early and respond to it appropriately need to address these factors and apply across a health service organisation. This standard identifies the systems and skills needed to ensure that a patient's deterioration is recognised promptly and appropriate action is taken.

If the standard is in place ...

- There are **systems** to support and promote the detection and recognition of acute deterioration, and the response to patients whose condition deteriorates
- Acute deterioration is **detected** and recognised, and action is taken to escalate care
- **Appropriate and timely care** is provided to patients whose condition is acutely deteriorating.

Changes from the first edition

The second edition of the NSQHS Standards streamlines actions and addresses gaps identified in the first edition.

The Recognising and Responding to Acute Deterioration Standard builds on the existing Recognising and Responding to Clinical Deterioration in Acute Health Care Standard from the first edition. The main changes are that the new standard recognises that deterioration can be physiological, mental, or both. Therefore, systems need to be in place to recognise and respond to patients' physical and mental deterioration.

The new standard focuses on ensuring that the elements of the process are in place, rather than on the process tools. The inclusion of systems to respond to a patient's deterioration in mental state will require consideration of existing processes and systems, and may require workforce training and support.

Key steps you can take to prepare for the second edition

- Review and strengthen the governance arrangements for recognising and responding to acute deterioration
- Continue to embed systems and processes for recognising and responding to acute deterioration into patient care
- Consider the high-risk times in your service context, and how the effectiveness of systems for recognising deterioration and responding to it can be improved
- Address gaps by collaborating with patients to develop or adapt structures and processes to support effective communication when or before patients begin to deteriorate.

Further information

A full copy of the Recognising and Responding to Acute Deterioration Standard, including the criteria and actions required for health service organisations to meet it, is contained in the NSQHS Standards (second edition). The NSQHS Standards (second edition) is available on the website of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care at www.safetyandquality.gov.au.

The **Advice Centre** provides support on implementing the NSQHS Standards for health service organisations, surveyors and accrediting agencies.

EMAIL accreditation@safetyandquality.gov.au

PHONE 1800 304 056

References

- 1 Buist M, Bernard S, Nguyen TV, Moore G, Anderson J. Association between clinical abnormal observations and subsequent in-hospital mortality: a prospective study. *Resuscitation* 2004;62:137–41.
- 2 Calzavacca P, Licari E, Tee A, Egi M, Downey A, Quach J, et al. The impact of Rapid Response System on delayed emergency team activation patient characteristics and outcomes: a follow-up study. *Resuscitation* 2010;81:31–5.
- 3 MERIT Study Investigators. Introduction of the medical emergency team (MET) system: a cluster-randomised controlled trial. *Lancet* 2005;365:2091–7.

National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards

The National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards were developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care with the Australian Government, state and territory partners, consumers and the private sector. The primary aim of the NSQHS Standards is to protect the public from harm and improve the quality of health care. They describe the level of care that should be provided by health service organisations and the systems that are needed to deliver such care.

The second edition of the NSQHS Standards were released in November 2017. Organisations will be assessed against the new standards from January 2019.