



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive



ACUTE  
MEDICINE



# **Guiding Framework and Policy for the National Early Warning Score System to Recognise and Respond to Clinical Deterioration**

## **National EWS System Project and associated Education Programme**

# International Links

- ***ACSQHC (2010) 'National Consensus Statement: essential elements for recognising and responding to clinical deterioration'***  
*Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.*
- ***ACT Health COMPASS programme – Australian Capital Territories***

# Purpose

- To describe the elements that are essential for prompt and reliable recognition of, and response to, clinical deterioration of patients in acute healthcare facilities.
- To guide healthcare facilities in developing recognition and response systems tailored to their patient population, and to the resources and personnel available.
- To support the implementation of the national standard for the Modified Early Warning Score system and supporting multidisciplinary educational programme (COMPASS©), and the standard communication tool 'ISBAR' (**I**dentification; **S**ituation; **B**ackground; **A**ssessment; **R**ecommendation).

# Scope

- Relates to the situation in the acute healthcare setting, where a patient's physiological condition is deteriorating.
- Focuses on ensuring that a 'track and trigger' system is in place for patients whose condition is deteriorating and outlines the organisational supports required to operationalise implementation.

# Scope: Patient Group

Applies to all patients in acute care facilities (HSE Model 1,2,3 and 4 hospitals). This includes:

- All inpatients on initial assessment, and as per clinical condition and clinical treatment.
  - Any outpatients/day services patients who attend acute healthcare facilities for an invasive procedure or who receive sedation.
  - All patients attending the Acute Medical Unit/ Acute Medical Assessment Unit/ Medical Assessment Unit
  - In the Emergency Department clinical assessment in triage is to identify the patients requiring MEWS. This is to be undertaken at the Advanced Triage stage in the patient journey, that occurs after the initial Manchester triage. However, all patients identified for admission should have a MEWS assessment incorporated, as part of the triage process.
- The Guiding Framework does not apply to patients in paediatric departments or in obstetric care.

# Scope: Healthcare staff

- The Guiding Framework applies to healthcare professionals and managers responsible for the development, implementation, review and audit of recognition and response systems in individual hospitals or groups of hospitals.
- It also applies to training and education support staff involved in the organisation and delivery of the COMPASS© training programme

# Guiding Principles : 1

Recognising patients whose condition is deteriorating and responding to their needs in an appropriate and timely way are essential components of safe and high quality care

## Guiding Principles: 2

- Recognition and response systems must apply to all patients, in all patient care areas, at all times

# Guiding Principles: 3

- Primary responsibility for caring for the patient rests with the primary medical practitioner or team. The utilisation of a Modified Early Warning score system and the MEWS escalation protocol/response system should therefore promote effective action by ward staff and the primary medical practitioner or team, or the attending medical practitioner or team. This includes calling for emergency assistance when required.

# Guiding Principles: 4

- Effectively recognising and responding to deterioration requires appropriate communication of diagnosis, including documentation of diagnosis in the healthcare record.

# Guiding Principles: 5

- Effectively recognising and responding to deterioration requires development and communication of plans for monitoring of observations and ongoing management of the patient.

# Guiding Principles: 6

- Recognition of and response to deterioration requires access to appropriately qualified, skilled and experienced staff.

# Guiding Principles: 7

- Recognition and response systems should encourage a positive, supportive response to escalation of care, irrespective of circumstances or outcome

## Guiding principles: 8

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- Care should be patient-focused and appropriate to the needs and wishes of the individual and their family or carer.
- Organisations should regularly review the effectiveness of the recognition and response systems they have in place.

# Essential Elements

## **Clinical processes**

1. Measurement and documentation of observations
  1. Modified Early Warning Score
2. Escalation of care
  1. MEWS Protocol
3. Rapid response systems
  1. Response teams
4. Clinical communication
  1. ISBAR, Handover

# Essential Elements

## Organisational prerequisites

5. Organisational supports
  1. Governance arrangements
  2. Senior management support
  3. EWS Committee
6. Education
  1. COMPASS© education programme
7. Evaluation, audit and feedback
  1. Minimum standards for audit

# Supporting Documentation

- Model Patient Observation Chart incorporating MEWS
- MEWS Protocol
- Pathway schema for response to acutely ill patient - Acute Medicine Programme Hospital models
- Implementation Guide
- Governance Structures
- Audit guidance
- Policy and procedure template