**Information on patient deterioration in New Zealand**

The Health Quality & Safety Commission has introduced information on patient deterioration in its [Atlas of Healthcare Variation](https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/health-quality-evaluation/projects/atlas-of-healthcare-variation/patient-deterioration/) online tool.

This is part of a larger national programme to improve early recognition and response when a patient’s physical condition quickly gets worse while they are in hospital.

Physical deterioration can happen at any time during a patient’s stay in hospital. Many patients show signs and symptoms of deterioration for some time before they experience things like cardiac arrest or having to go to an intensive care unit (ICU).

This Atlas uses information about patients who have had an emergency admission to ICU. The information highlights areas of variation between units, to see whether there are opportunities for district health board (DHB) hospitals to improve the quality of their services. Variation means the difference between the treatment patients receive in one hospital compared with another.

**What this Atlas shows**

* There was wide (more than four-fold) variation between DHBs in emergency admission of patients to ICU from a ward. This variation partly reflects the different levels of care available in DHBs. For example, hospitals that do not have a high dependency unit have to admit sicker patients to the ICU instead.
* The average length of stay in ICU of a patient following an emergency admission from a ward is 20 hours longer than patients admitted to ICU in other ways.
* One-fifth of patients admitted to ICU as an emergency from a ward received invasive ventilation (where a tube is put into their airway to help them breathe).
* The severity of illness following an emergency admission to ICU varied between DHBs.
* There were no significant differences in death rates between DHBs for patients admitted to ICU as an emergency.
* There was wide variation between DHBs in the percent of patients discharged from ICU to the ward after-hours.

**More information**

You can read more about the patient deterioration programme [here](https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/patient-deterioration). There is also a section about [patient, family and whānau escalation](https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/patient-deterioration/patient-family-and-whanau-escalation/) (which is when a patient’s family or whānau alerts the health care team to deterioration in a patient’s condition).