



What You Need to Know about Rapid Response Teams: *A Fact Sheet for Patients and Their Family Members*

A Rapid Response Team is a group of medical professionals who are trained to help when there are signs that a patient is getting much sicker. The purpose of a rapid response team is to help before there is a medical emergency such as a heart attack.

Rapid response teams take action very quickly when something goes wrong. They may suggest laboratory tests, x-rays, medications, or even moving the patient to an intensive care unit. These actions can help patients get better and live longer.

Problems can happen any time a patient is in the hospital. This includes just after surgery, during medical tests, or when a patient is recovering from an illness.

Warning signs that a patient is getting much sicker:

- Changes in the heart or respiratory (breathing) rate
- A drop in blood pressure (it gets much lower)
- Changes in urinary output (much more or much less urine)
- Confusion or other mental status (thinking) changes
- When something just does not look or seem right with the patient

How family members can help:

- Find out if the hospital has a rapid response team.
- Ask the nurse to call the rapid response team when there are warning signs that the patient is getting much sicker.

You can learn more about Rapid Response Teams as they relate to the 5 Million Lives Campaign at www.ihl.org.

The 5 Million Lives Campaign is an initiative to protect patients from five million incidents of medical harm over the next two years (December 2006 – December 2008).

<http://www.ihl.org/IHI/Programs/Campaign/Campaign.htm>

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