

Critical Care Nursing

Critical care nursing, or intensive care unit (ICU) nursing, is a specialty focused on the care of unstable, chronically ill or post-surgical patients and those at risk from life-threatening diseases and injuries. Typical work settings also include patients' personal residences, outpatient surgery centers, private physicians' offices, managed care centers, and nursing schools. In any employment setting, the critical care nurse must have the ability to perform complex patient assessments, implement intensive interventions and therapies, and monitor patients, all while remaining calm in desperate, sometimes life-threatening situations. Because a critically ill or injured patient's condition can change quickly without warning, the critical care nurse must be capable of immediately changing a current care plan and providing emergency care as necessary. Besides direct, hands-on care, the critical care nurse also performs the important role of acting as the patient's advocate. In this position, advocacy means supporting and respecting the basic rights, values, and beliefs of a patient who is critically ill or injured. Performing as the patient's representative, a critical care nurse finds additional resources for patients outside of

the immediate care setting to assist in their recovery. The critical care nurse works with patients and families who are experiencing extreme stress. An empathetic, compassionate nature and the ability to remain calm in life or death situations are necessary to perform effectively in this position. Additionally, the critical care nurse must learn not to take patient and family behaviors as personal attacks; instead, he or she should remain calm and dispassionate in all situations. The nurse must have the ability to make tough decisions, think quickly and calmly, and maintain a caring but objective attitude.