

Emotional influences in patient safety.

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<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/emotional-influences-patient-safety>

Clinicians are intimately familiar with the pressures of working in a busy, emotionally stressful environment. This commentary uses a framework derived from cognitive psychology to demonstrate the impact of physicians' emotional state on the risk of committing errors. A series of case examples is used to illustrate how subconscious biases, acute stressors, burnout, and overt [behavioral disorders](#) can cause clinicians to commit cognitive errors—particularly [diagnostic errors](#)—leading to preventable patient harm. Prior research in this area has linked burnout in [nurses](#), [resident physicians](#), and [surgeons](#) to increased error rates. The authors offer several suggestions for identifying and minimizing harm among patients and physicians due to emotional stressors; chief among these are early identification of [impaired physicians](#) and clinical teaching of [metacognition](#) that acknowledges the deleterious effects of clinicians' biases.