

Are We Following Recommendations For Completing POLST Forms In Hospitalized Patients with Serious Illnesses?

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Introduction

- The Physician's Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) is a set of medical orders aim to prevent unwanted or unnecessarily treatment in seriously ill or frail patients, reduce their suffering, and ensure that final wishes are honored at the end of life.
- The State of New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) recommends completing a POLST form for patients with serious life-limiting or terminal illnesses.

Objective

- To determine how many patients with do-not-resuscitate (DNR) orders who were hospitalized at University Hospital, also had POLST or advanced directive (AD) forms filled out.
- To assess the impact of COVID pandemic on completion of POLST forms.

Conclusion

- On average, 1 out of 4 patients with a DNR order had a completed POLST/AD form prior to admission, which was significantly lower in COVID patients both prior to admission and on discharge.
- Further research should explore how to improve POLST form completion in hospitalized patients with serious illnesses.

Methods

- A retrospective case-control study of 207 patients
- Source population: all patients with DNR order hospitalized at University Hospital from October 2019 to December 2020 (n=1370)
- Study population:
 - Cases: all patients with confirmed COVID infection (n=69)
 - Controls: a computer-generated random sample of non-COVID patients (n=138)
- Inclusion criteria:
 - older than 18 years of age
 - DNR orders in the EMR
- Statistical analysis: test of difference for two independent samples

Results

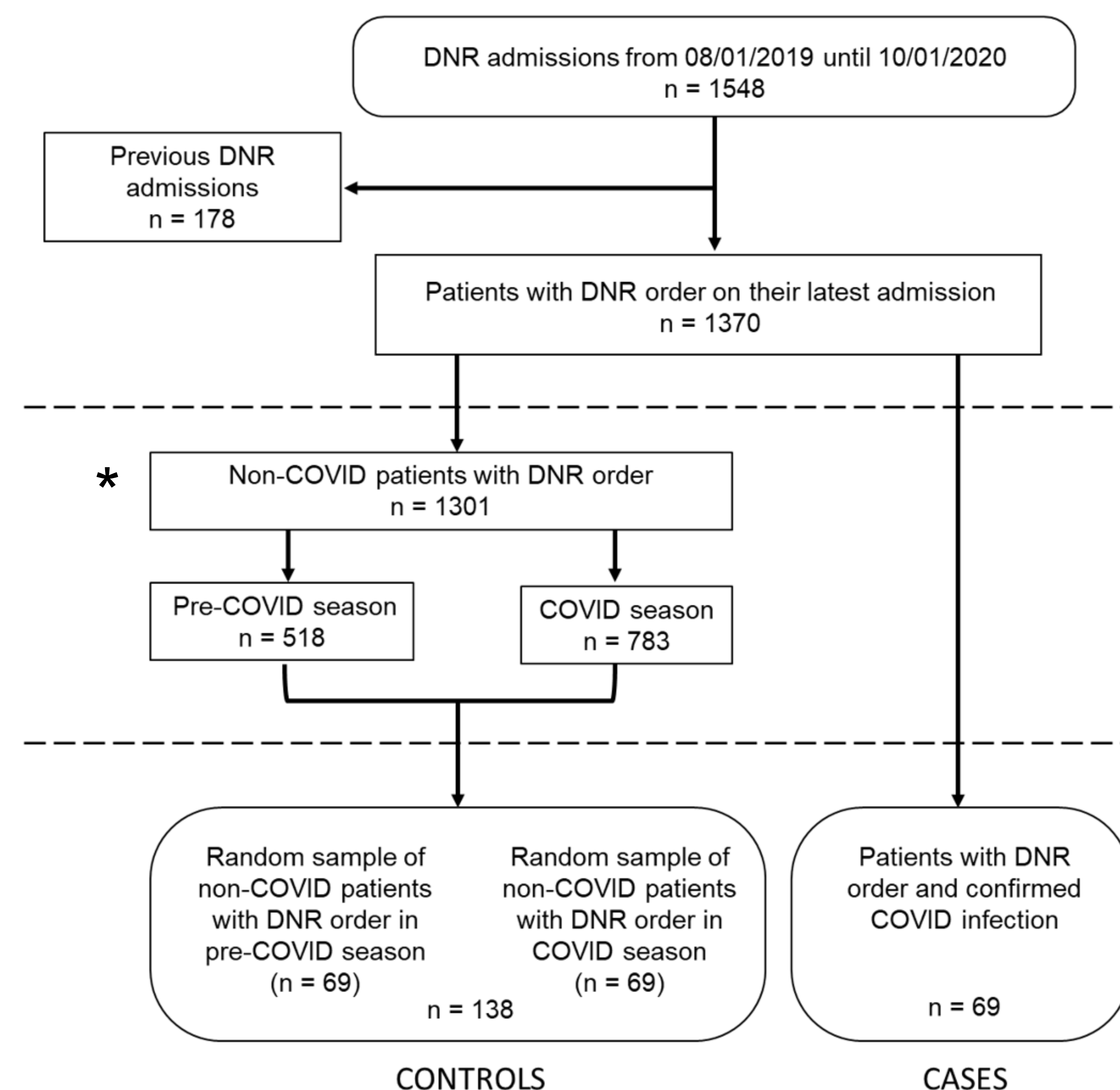


Figure 1. Participants flow chart.

* equal distribution on controls in pre-COVID season and during COVID season

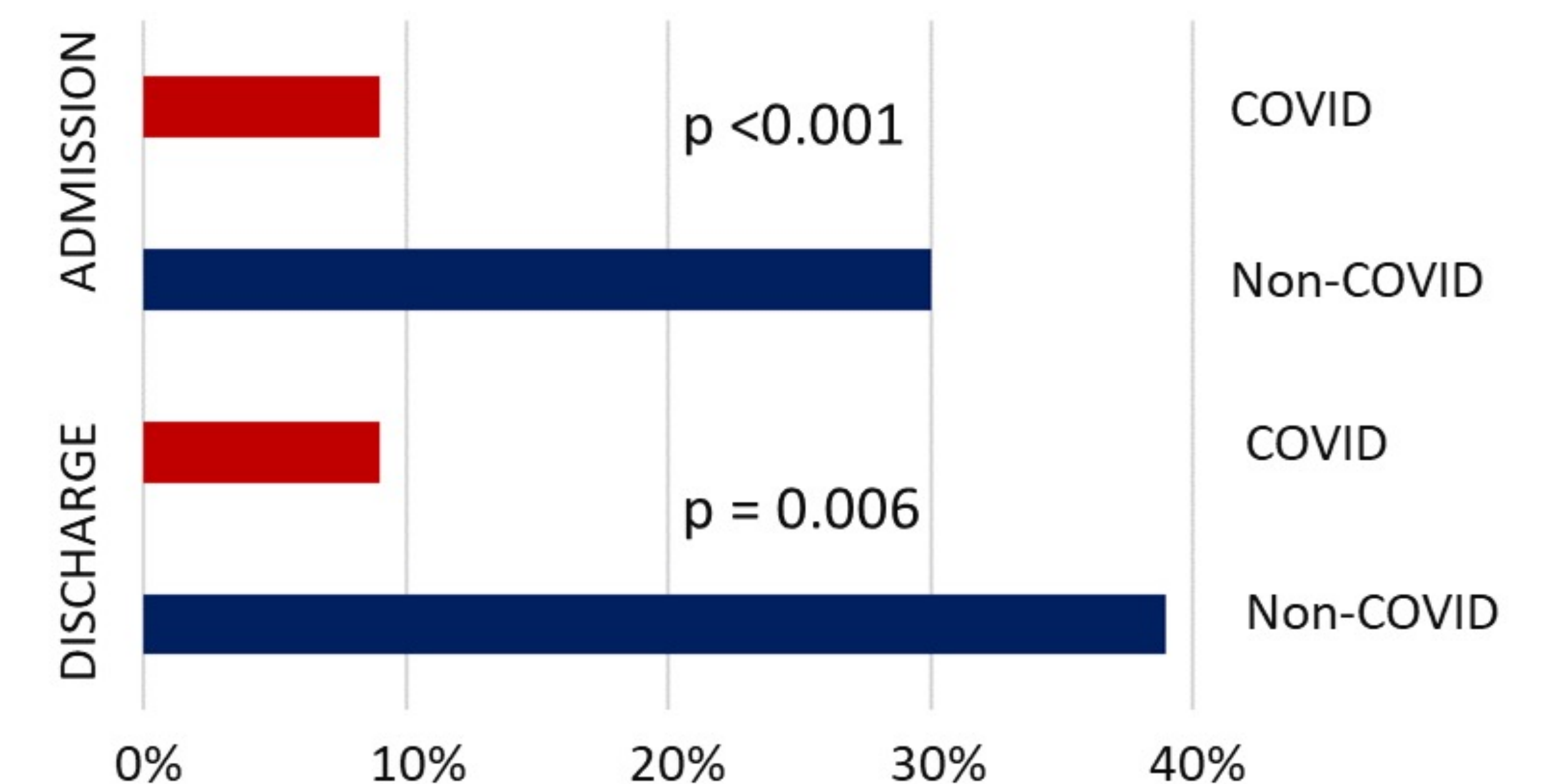


Figure 2. Percentage of patients with completed POLST/AD forms on admission and discharge.

POLST/AD form was present on admission in 30% of non-COVID patients and 9% of COVID patients (p<0.001). A total of 102 patients (56 of non-COVID and 46 of COVID) died during hospitalization. Amongst those who survived, a POLST/AD form was completed on discharge by 39% of non-COVID patients and 9% of COVID patients (p=0.006). p-value <0.05 signifies statistically significant difference between COVID and non-COVID patients.