



New Research Shows Clinicians Should Not Use DNR Status To Infer More About a Patient's Treatment Wishes

A study of Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) orders in the first year of implementation of a registry in Oregon found that 28% of the roughly 25,000 registrants wanted CPR done, and 72% had Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders. When patients had DNR orders, 50% wanted comfort measures only, and 50% wanted full treatment or limited additional interventions. The authors say, "Thus, half of patients with DNR orders would want to be transported to the hospital if indicated, and half would not unless comfort needs could not be met in their current location." They conclude, "**Registry data illustrate why clinicians should not use DNR status to infer more about a patient's wishes. Focus on documenting code status may distract from more important issues, and resuscitation may not be the best question for patients with advanced illness and frailty.** POLST orders for scope of treatment may be more useful because they allow patients to designate treatment preferences before a cardiopulmonary arrest." (*JAMA*, 2012,307(1):34-35, dx.doi.org/10.1001/jama.2011.1956)

We are starting to gather similar data in West Virginia. The following table compares orders on the 490 Physician Orders for Scope of Treatment (POST) forms (similar to POLST) submitted to the WV e-Directive Registry to the report on the Oregon Registry. In brief, more West Virginians wanted DNR orders and more West Virginians with DNR orders wanted to be admitted to the hospital for additional interventions.

	WV (Number=490)	OR (Number=25,142)
Age over 65 years	84%	86%
DNR order on POST form	84%	72%
Admit to the hospital	60%	50%

Advance directive forms (living wills, medical powers of attorney, and combined forms) can be downloaded from the WV Center for End-of-Life Care website at www.wvendoflife.org and FAXed to the Registry at 304-293-7442. Health care providers can obtain POST forms for their patients by calling the Center at 877-209-8086 or completing the online request form at <http://www.hsc.wvu.edu/chel/wvi/request.html>. Older advance directives, DNR cards, and POST forms can still be sent to the Registry by submitting with the forms a completed Sign-Up form located on the website at <http://www.wvendoflife.org/MediaLibraries/WVCEOLC/Media/public/Demographicinfoform4.pdf>

www.wvendoflife.org

Toll-free number

877-209-8086

WV e-Directive Registry

FAX 304-293-7442