

April 23, 2020

Methodologic flaws that lead to overestimates of mortality from COVID-19

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I read the report by Richardson and colleagues on the outcomes of COVID-19 patients in New York (1). The authors report that 88.1% of patients requiring mechanical ventilation died. This is potentially misleading and subject to misinterpretation.

The study enrolled 5,700 patients hospitalized with COVID-19 during a 35-day period from March 1 to April 4, 2020. Outcome analysis on the 2,634 patients who died or were discharged was performed. The remaining 3,066 patients that were alive and remain in the hospitals were excluded from analysis. Mechanical ventilation was required in 320 (12.1%) of the 2,634 patients in the analysis, and ...

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Editors' Note: Clarification and Article Correction

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JAMA appreciates the above comments noting the potentially misleading nature of the report of 88% mortality in ventilated patients, and noting possible math errors in Table 2.

On April 24 a clarification was published and the article was corrected (1). The clarification states:

In the Abstract, Results paragraph, the sentence reporting mortality for patients receiving mechanical ventilation should read, "As of April 4, 2020, for patients requiring mechanical ventilation (n = 1151, 20.2%), 38 (3.3%) were discharged alive, 282 (24.5%) died, and 831 (72.2%) remained in hospital." This same sentence was added to the second paragraph of the ...

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