

**OPTN Executive Committee
Meeting Summary
August 18, 2023
Webex**

Dianne LaPointe Rudow, ANP-BC, DNP, FAAN, Chair

Introduction

The OPTN Executive Committee met via Webex on 08/18/2023 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Welcome and Announcements
2. OPTN Task Force on Efficiency

The following is a summary of the Committee's discussions.

1. Welcome and Announcements

Dianne LaPointe Rudow, Chair of the Executive Committee, welcomed the committee and presented the agenda.

2. OPTN Task Force on Efficiency

Dr. LaPointe Rudow explained the purpose of the Task Force on Efficiency and noted that the creation of the Task Force will allow for coordinated, collaborative, and intentional efforts to encourage system efficiency and improve utilization. Recently, the environment of organ transplantation has changed with new regulations, new technology, and new practices. Dr. LaPointe Rudow explained that with the increase of donors every year, there are new challenges that deal with this increase in organs and with broader sharing in allocation. The increasing number of donors has tested the system capacity with larger offer volumes and a greater need for resources in order to ensure organs are allocated and patients are transplanted. The Board identified these challenges in June, and the hope is for the Task Force to address these challenges.

The Task Force will coordinate efforts with work that has been completed, work that is currently underway, and future work. Dr. LaPointe Rudow noted that the Task Force hopes to develop and utilize avenues for continuous collaboration, which could involve requesting, receiving, and organizing feedback from the community. The community is asking for a more efficient system, and the plan is that engaging those across the transplant community will develop a targeted and specific plan to tackle the most important areas for improvement identified by the community.

The Task Force will review recommendations from the 2018 Systems Performance Committee. Recommendations from the committee involved a more cohesive and efficient transplant community and the standardization of policies, protocols, and practices. The hope is that with more standardized practices in place, this will lead to more flexibility within the system. The committee also recommended that OPOs and transplant centers work more collaboratively. The Systems Performance Committee key recommendation was to focus on a definition of late decline/turndowns and collecting data.

The Task Force will also analyze the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) Report: Realizing the Promise of Equity in the Organ Transplantation System recommendations, including continuous quality improvement efforts across the transplant system.

The OPTN Strategic Plan was shared with the committee to highlight how the current plan aligns with the work of the Task Force. Dr. LaPointe Rudow shared that, for example, the goal to increase the number of transplants will align with the Task Force's efforts to pursue policies and system tools that promote system efficiency and increase organ utilization. Efforts could include expanding the use of offer filters to reduce unwanted offers and increase efficiency placement, reforming the use of the "provisional yes" to make it a timely, meaningful response, and to expedite offers for difficult to place organs. The goal to provide equity in access to transplantation will align with the Task Force's efforts to implement continuous distribution policy framework and provide more flexible, patient-focused allocation policies. The Task Force's work to increase the ability for allocation policies to be dynamic and incorporate changes to respond to post-implementation findings also aligns with the goal to provide equity in access to transplantation.

Dr. LaPointe Rudow shared feedback received during the Summer 2023 Regional Meeting cycle on the place to create the Task Force on Efficiency. Feedback has shown support for improving system efficiency and allocation efficiency, and to include efficiency in the next OPTN Strategic Plan.

The continuous distribution of lungs was shared as an example as a need to improve efficiency. Early monitoring suggests that the new system is benefitting patients, but the benefits have come with some costs to efficiency. Two and a half times as many transplant programs are receiving offers before acceptance and this has caused a burden on centers who are not used to receiving that many offers. The time of acceptance and the time it takes for OPOs to place an organ has also doubled, and there has been an increase in the median distance traveled which can impact other factors such as the necessary modes of transportation, offer acceptance patterns, and cold ischemic time. Dr. LaPointe Rudow emphasized the importance in analyzing the challenges the lung community is facing so they can be proactively addressed before continuous distribution of kidneys or livers is implemented, which will affect many more organs to be traveled and much further distances. The Lung Committee has created a Lung Continuous Distribution Efficiency project to analyze different efficiency challenges. Currently, the lung committee is considering creating offer filters for lungs, updating offer notification limits, changing donor acceptance criteria, and standardizing lung donor testing. While the Lung Committee is currently exploring these potential solutions, it is important for the entire community to understand these potential solutions for different organs and create a standardized approach before more organs are implemented in the continuous distribution framework.

Ann-Marie Leary, Assistant Director of Member Quality, presented two potential areas of focus for the Task Force to work on if the Executive Committee approves to move forward with the Task Force. The community has seen an increase in kidney allocation out of sequence and kidney non-use and the community has asked that these issues be addressed. The charge of the Task Force would be to determine the root causes of these issues and understand what can be improved upon from an efficiency standpoint.

Dr. LaPointe Rudow shared potential next steps with the Executive Committee, including sharing the Task Force initiative with the full Board of Directors and performing outreach to various policymaking committees to obtain feedback on the potential impact on work. The OPTN plans to send a communication out to the entire community to explain what the charge of the Task Force is, what the Task Force hopes to accomplish, and explain the benefits this work will have on patients.

Work that does not align with the Task Force initiatives may see a change in timeline while the Task Force is operating. Work that aligns with the initiative will likely continue, but this will be determined by the Task Force. Specifically, continuous distribution efforts will need to be discussed in depth in terms of resource allocation and staff capacity. Messaging of these efforts are important so there is understanding throughout the community on the efforts.

Summary of Discussion:

A committee member recommended performing outreach to the Pediatric and Minority Affairs Committees. Dr. LaPointe Rudow responded that it is important that all committees be involved in the Task Force's efforts. A committee member asked if patient care will be a focus area of the Task Force. Dr. LaPointe Rudow responded that patients will be part of the process and there will be multiple forums for patients to share their insight. The committee member asked how the CMS performance metrics would be included in the analysis of the Task Force and who will be part of the Task Force. Dr. LaPointe Rudow agreed that the conversation of metrics is a reoccurring question throughout the community during regional meetings, and these metrics could be a conversation topic for the Task Force. The OPTN President will appoint the members of the Task Force. The Task Force will include current Board members, non-Board members, and key stakeholders in the community. Ms. Leary informed the group that the Assistant Director of Patient and Member Relations will assist on patient outreach during the initiative to ensure patient feedback is received.

A committee member asked if it would be possible to simultaneously analyze data to identify where some solutions and opportunities may be within the data. Dr. LaPointe Rudow explained that the Task Force will analyze data that already exists but will also determine where there is an opportunity for more data. Outside sources of data will also be utilized throughout the Task Force's work to have a more holistic view of all the data and resources that are available. A committee member suggested stratifying the offer acceptance process to ensure more people are transplanted and to decrease organ non-use. They suggested analyzing equity across the system rather than at the individual level to ensure that the system is viewed more holistically.

A representative from HRSA asked what effect the Task Force may have on current workplans and if resources are realigned, what time frame this realignment would follow. They also asked how this realignment may affect the budget. Dr. Maureen McBride, OPTN Executive Director, responded that as the Task Force is developing, the OPTN will continue to analyze resources and budget to ensure they align with one another. The contractor plans to keep HRSA abreast of all updates to resources and the budget.

A committee member stated that there will likely be overwhelming support from the OPO community. They asked what the goal is for the first Task Force meeting and what the desired timeline is. Dr. LaPointe Rudow responded that once the Executive Committee and Board endorse the creation of the Task Force, then members will be appointed, and the Task Force will hopefully have their first meeting in October.

Next Steps:

Once the Task Force has more information and clarity on recommendations, discussions will continue about other work and prioritization about both policy and non-policy related efforts.

Upcoming Meetings

- August 23, 2023
- September 8, 2023
- September 22, 2023
- October 10, 2023
- November 6, 2023

Attendance

- **Committee Members**
 - Andrea Tietjen
 - Dianne LaPointe Rudow
 - Ginny McBride
 - Jerry McCauley
 - Jim Sharrock
 - Linda Cendales
 - Melissa McQueen
 - Richard Formica
 - Silas Norman
 - Valinda Jones
 - Wendy Garrison
- **HRSA Representatives**
 - Christopher McLaughlin
 - Frank Holloman
 - Shannon Taitt
- **UNOS Staff**
 - Ann-Maire Leary
 - Anna Messmer
 - Dale Smith
 - Jacqui O'Keefe
 - James Alcorn
 - Kaitlin Swanner
 - Krissy Laurie
 - Laura Cartwright
 - Liz Robbins Callahan
 - Maureen McBride
 - Michael Ghaffari
 - Michelle Rabold
 - Morgan Jupe
 - Roger Brown
 - Ryan Ehrensberger
 - Susie Sprinson