

To: Liver transplant program directors
Liver transplant program administrators
OPO executive directors

From: Julie Heimbach, M.D.
Chair, OPTN/UNOS Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee

Subject: Liver Committee update, January 2018

We want to continue to update you on the status of major projects involving the OPTN/UNOS Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee.

HCC policy change went live on 12/12/2017

On 12/12/2017, the changes to HCC policy approved by the OPTN/UNOS Board in December 2016 were enacted. These changes include a specific upper limit of AFP that is allowed for standard MELD exception. They also include a specific downstaging policy whereby patients who present outside of standard T2 criteria may be eligible for MELD exception if they are successfully treated and demonstrate a reduction of tumor burden to within T2 criteria.

HCC special public comment and potential implementation

This is a special public comment period open until January 31. You may review the proposal [here](#) and comment if you choose. This provision would restore automatic approval of exception extensions for a subset of candidates with treated HCC lesions who, as a result, fall below the eligibility criteria for an initial exception request. Please review and provide any feedback here.

Our committee will consider public comment and provide our recommendation to the OPTN/UNOS Executive Committee, which can act on it on an expedited basis. If the policy revision is approved, it will be scheduled for implementation February 5, 2018. We will provide follow-up information after the Executive Committee action.

Implementation of NLRB and liver distribution enhancements

UNOS is actively developing plans for implementation of both the National Liver Review Board (NLRB) and policy amendments to liver distribution. The two systems are interrelated and will need to be implemented together in stages.

The NLRB will change how cases are reviewed (national instead of regional) and the scores that patients will be awarded. Specifically, the median MELD at transplant (MMaT) score by DSA, minus 3 points, will

be the default exception score for many candidates with standard MELD exceptions upon implementation of the NLRB. This will also eliminate the “MELD elevator” for exception points.

The NLRB will review non-standard exception requests. If they approve them, the scores will be also be typically related to the MMaT (higher, or lower, depending on the specific risk of the clinical situation). Please review the policy notices for both [NLRB](#) and [enhanced distribution](#) to familiarize yourself with the new systems.

We anticipate that the initial phase of the NLRB will be introduced first, beginning in the third quarter of 2018. This will be followed by the changes to the distribution system which were approved at the December Board meeting, and then in subsequent months, the final phase of the NLRB which will improve the way the standard MELD exceptions are able to be reviewed. We will share additional information as more details are made final.

For questions or further information

If you'd like to know more about existing policies or public comment items, please visit our committee's page on the OPTN website and/or contact your Regional Administrator. If you'd like to know more about projects or proposals our committee continues to discuss, contact your regional representative to the committee or send an e-mail to liver@unos.org.