

OPTN Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee

Meeting Summary

June 2, 2023

Conference Call

James Pomposelli, MD, PhD, Chair

Scott Biggins, MD, Vice Chair

Introduction

The OPTN Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee (the Committee) met via Citrix GoToMeeting teleconference on 06/02/2023 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Discussion: Values Prioritization Exercise (VPE) and Priorities for Optimization Analysis

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

1. Discussion: Values Prioritization Exercise (VPE) and Priorities for Optimization Analysis

The Committee continued to discuss the VPE results, priorities for the optimization analysis, and definitions for each attribute's purpose.

Summary of discussions:

A member reminded the Committee of previous discussions about multi-visceral transplant (MVT) waitlist outcomes and thinks that moving to a continuous distribution system would make addressing this problem more complex. They are concerned about how the Committee will ensure priority for MVT candidates in this new system. The Chair agreed that MVT candidates do require higher priority, however there are not many candidates who require an MVT. They said that the Committee will utilize the optimization analysis to help determine adequate priority for MVT candidates, however this may not occur until later in the process. The Chair suggested the Committee should focus on what outcomes they want each attribute to achieve before developing rating scales.

The Chair wanted the Committee to discuss each attribute one at a time to ensure that the purpose of each attribute was conveying what they wanted and to provide members an opportunity to correct or modify the attribute's purpose. The Committee reviewed the proposed purpose of the medical urgency attribute: prioritize candidates who are most likely to die or be removed from the waitlist without a transplant. The Committee had no feedback on the proposed purpose for medical urgency.

The Committee reviewed the proposed purpose of the blood type attribute: provide equal access to transplant for candidates regardless of their blood type. An alternative proposed purpose may be transplanting compatible donors and recipients. The Vice Chair stated that the blood type attribute may provide an opportunity to improve the current way blood type is incorporated into liver allocation. They mentioned that if there were to be equal access across all four blood types, it must be considered that these organs may travel farther. They mentioned that they were satisfied with the proposed purpose of blood type and mentioned that unintended consequences of trying to equalize all blood types may make this complicated, therefore having iterations will be helpful in mitigating the complexity. The Chair agreed that it would be nice to level the playing field for all blood types, however only one blood type is compatible with all other types, therefore the Committee must make sure there are high standards in place to allow blood type O to share. The Chair noted that candidates with type O blood get

transplanted at higher MELD scores than any other blood group because they do not have the same opportunities. The Vice Chair mentioned that the mathematical optimization analysis which can rapidly work through permutations, will help the Committee understand the ability to equalize transplant access for all blood types. The Chair said the Committee's goal in this is to level the playing field as much as possible, understanding that parity may not be achieved but the goal is to provide equal access to the best of the Committee's ability and to improve the system from where it currently is. The Vice Chair agreed with both proposed purposes for the blood type attribute.

The Committee reviewed the proposed purpose for the height/body surface area (BSA) attribute: provide equal access to transplant for candidates regardless of their height or BSA. The Chair described how the OPTN Lung Transplantation Committee approached the height attribute. They mentioned that small statured candidates have a more challenging time receiving a compatible organ, therefore the height/body surface area (BSA) attribute should be focused more on small statured candidates. The Vice Chair recommended rephrasing the purpose of the attribute to provide smaller statured candidates with equitable access to liver grafts compared to non-small statured candidates. They said they want to ensure equal access for other attributes as well, specifically high BSA, pediatrics, and liver-intestine.

The Committee reviewed the proposed purpose for the pediatric priority attribute: prioritize pediatric candidates for pediatric donors. The Chair suggested that the purpose of the pediatric priority is to eliminate the pediatric waitlist. The previous OPTN Pediatric Transplantation Committee Chair raised the concern of pediatric candidates for pediatric donors concerns them because there has been a recent decline in pediatric donors. The previous OPTN Pediatric Transplantation Committee Chair suggested to align the purpose of the pediatric priority attribute to align with the charter of the OPTN Pediatric Transplantation Committee.

The Committee reviewed the proposed purpose for the living donor attribute: prioritize living donors. The Chair mentioned that this would also have an impact on a small number of candidates. The Vice Chair agreed that prioritize was an appropriate word to use and said that living donors may not need as high of priority like a pediatric candidate would. A member recommended that living donors be given high priority. The Chair affirmed that living donors should be prioritized.

The Committee reviewed the proposed purpose for the split liver attribute: prioritize those candidates willing to accept and likely to initiate a split liver transplant. An alternative purpose may be to incentivize split liver transplant for transplant programs. The Chair stated that the Committee should consider prioritizing small-statured candidates who are more willing to accept a split liver as well as incentivizing transplant programs to perform split liver transplants. A member noted that this attribute is more a transplant program-specific attribute, not a candidate-specific attribute. The Chair agreed and stated it would be an innovative idea to incentivize transplant programs participating in split liver transplants. A non-member reminded the committee that the purpose of optimizing the system is to increase the number of transplants. A member suggested the prioritization of the second segment, as during split liver transplant it is often not utilized. The Vice Chair recommended inserting language about appropriate donors, as not every liver is able to be split. The Chair mentioned that a candidate willing to accept a split liver is taking less risks than remaining on the transplant waiting list. The Vice Chair recommended that the candidate must have incentive, and this is where prioritization of candidates willing to take a split liver would allow that to occur. A member reminded the Committee that 97% of split liver transplants are generated by a pediatric candidate., The member recommended a way to incentivize split liver transplant is to allocate using a pediatric match run before allocating to adults. The member noted this may have unintended consequences such as impacting liver-intestine candidates. The Chair suggested the purpose of split liver transplant as an attribute is to prioritize splittable livers for pediatric candidates and small-statured adults.

The Committee reviewed the proposed purpose for the proximity attribute: increase efficiency in organ placement system. The Committee reviewed the proposed purpose for the travel attribute: reduce distance between donor hospital and transplant program. The Chair said proximity and travel were self-evident, thus the Committee moved on to discussing geographic equity.

The Committee reviewed the proposed purpose for geographic equity: provide equal access to transplant regardless of location of transplant program. The Chair reminded members that they presented on the April 3, 2023 meeting on the topic of trying to provide equal access to candidates based on the number of donors. The Vice Chair stated that the purpose of geographic equity should include language to reflect an emphasis on geographic location. A member voiced his disagreement with the phrase “equal access”, as to them, access is about transplant program behavior, not population size or location of transplant program. The Vice Chair agreed and noted interest for reviewing unfiltered offer rates because transplant programs can decline higher risk offers but that is their own decision. The Chair suggested one way to incorporate geographic equity as an attribute is that candidates would receive points on a degrading scale based on a factor determined by the Committee, such as population density. The Chair added that the current 500 nautical miles (NM) does not work for each transplant center.

Next steps:

The Committee will continue to determine the purpose and metrics of success for each attribute.

Upcoming Meeting

- June 16, 2023 @ 3:00 PM ET (teleconference)

Attendance

- **Committee Members**
 - Alan Gunderson
 - Allison Kwong
 - Christopher Sonnenday
 - Colleen Reed
 - Greg McKenna
 - Jennifer Muriett
 - James Pomposelli
 - James Trotter
 - Joseph DiNorcia
 - Kym Watt
 - Neil Shah
 - Scott Biggins
 - Shimul Shah
 - Shunji Nagai
 - Sophoclis Alexopoulos
 - Peter Abt
 - Vanessa Pucciarelli
- **HRSA Representatives**
 - Adriana Martinez
- **SRTR Staff**
 - Jack Lake
 - Katie Audette
- **UNOS Staff**
 - Erin Schnellinger
 - James Alcorn
 - Joel Newman
 - Katrina Gauntt
 - Kayla Balfour
 - Laura Schmitt
 - Lloyd Brown
 - Matt Cafarella
 - Meghan McDermott
 - Niyati Upadhyay
 - Susan Tlusty
- **Other**
 - Catherine Kling
 - Christine Radolovic
 - Dave Weimer
 - Emily Perito
 - Evelyn Hsu
 - S. DeLair