

OPTN Ad Hoc International Relations Committee

Meeting Summary

March 28, 2023

Conference Call

Pramod Bonde, MD, Chair

Peter Stock, MD, Vice Chair

Introduction

The OPTN Ad Hoc International Relations Committee (the Committee) met via Citrix GoToMeeting teleconference on 03/28/2023 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Project Recap: *Best Practices for Managing International Living Donors in the U.S.*
3. Review Project Outline

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

1. Welcome and Introductions

Staff welcomed the Committee and introduced members from the Living Donor Committee and Ethics Committee. Members from the Ethics and Living Donor Committees will help collaborate on the Committee's project, *Best Practices for Managing International Living Donors in the U.S.*

Summary of discussion:

There were no further discussions from the Committee.

2. Project Recap: *Best Practices for Managing International Living Donors in the U.S.*

The Committee heard a summary of the Committee's project, *Best Practices for Managing International Living Donors in the U.S.*

This project aims to provide transplant programs with guidance on how to manage international living donors effectively and efficiently in the U.S.

Per [OPTN Policy 14.1.A](#), transplant programs must evaluate all living donors. While this policy provides instructions for evaluating and assessing all living donors, the transplant center sets the specific process and may face obstacles when evaluating international living donor candidates. The evaluation process is resource-intensive and includes various challenges for assessing the risk of exploitation, addressing communication barriers, logistics barriers, and follow-up care options. These difficulties identified within the process warrant special attention for programs to address the obstacles and manage the care of international donors efficiently and effectively.

Summary of discussion:

There were no further discussions from the Committee.

3. Review Project Outline

The Committee reviewed the draft outline for their project and provided feedback.

Summary of discussion:

The Vice-Chair commented that the guidance document should clarify OPTN policy requirements for Non-U. S. Citizens/Non-U.S. Residents (NCNR) receiving a transplant in the U.S. He explained that there used to be an OPTN policy specifying a guideline that for each program, if more than 5% of deceased donor transplants went to recipients categorized as NCNR, then the Committee could review and audit the program's activity. While this guideline is no longer in policy, some programs are unaware and are using this as a rationale for not transplanting NCNR. He added that it's essential to clarify OPTN policies for NCNR receiving a transplant in the U.S. Another member agreed and stated that while the guidance document is about living donors, rules that apply to their potential recipient are important and need to be addressed. Another member added that it would be helpful to clarify relevant policies for each of the sections.

A member stated that informed consent from the potential donor is a communication issue and should be addressed. He explained that it's difficult to assure good, informed consent when there are language barriers. Another member noted that a barrier to communication is initiating the first contact with the potential donor. A potential donor must initiate the process, and it can be challenging if the individual is living in a different country and does not speak English. Another member shared that in the past, their program provided the recipient with a collection form allowing the potential donor to contact the program.

A member summarized an article, *Evaluation, and Care of International Living Kidney Donor Candidates: Strategies for Addressing Common Considerations and Challenges*, and suggested that the Committee could build off the recommendations presented. Another member added that the Committee could identify specific resources for each of the barriers.

In terms of resources needed for the project, a member noted that international donor follow-up might not be as robust as U.S. donor follow-up and stated that it would be helpful to have data on if there are significant differences between U.S. donors versus international donors during the six months, 1-year, and 2-year follow-up periods. Additionally, the member inquired about the proportion of international donors participating in the kidney-paired donation (KPD) program. Lastly, the member expressed interest in understanding the most common countries that international living donors travel from.

The Vice-Chair commented that when considering international long-term donor follow-up, it's critical to think about what kind of databases in the U.S. can be accessed to obtain data that may not be in the donor forms. He shared that this is a very important topic that should be addressed in the donor follow-up section.

Another member stated that there are numerous non-governmental organizations (NGO) that are global and region-specific and there may be opportunities for potential living donors to utilize these organizations for some logistical and administrative assistance when contacting and communicating with transplant centers to assist with the initial screening and donor evaluation.

Upcoming Meeting

- April 25, 2023

Attendance

- **Committee Members**
 - Pramod Bonde
 - Peter Stock
 - Abby Ruiz
 - Barry Friedman
 - Carrie Thiessen
 - Chang Liu
 - Eliana Agudelo
 - Scott Sanoff
 - Sylvia Villalon
- **HRSA Representatives**
 - Shannon Dunne
 - Jim Bowman
 - Arjun Naik
- **SRTR Staff**
- **UNOS Staff**
 - Tamika Watkins
 - Susan Tlusty
 - Meghan McDermott
- **Other Attendees**
 - Ehab Saad
 - George Bayliss
 - Nahel Elias
 - Vineeta Kumar