

## **OPTN Ad Hoc International Relations Committee**

### **Meeting Summary**

**February 22, 2022**

**Conference Call**

**Barry Friedman, RN, BSN, MBA, CPTC, Chair**

**Pramod Bonde, MD, Vice Chair**

### **Introduction**

The OPTN Ad Hoc International Relations Committee (Committee) met via Citrix GoTo Meeting teleconference on 02/22/2022 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Winter 2022 Public Comment
2. Discussion: Project Ideas

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

#### **1. Winter 2022 Public Comment Preview**

The Committee was reminded to participate in regional meetings and Winter 2022 Public Comment.

##### Summary of discussion:

There were no comments or questions.

#### **2. Discussion: Project Ideas**

The Committee discussed new project ideas.

##### Summary of discussion:

*Project Idea: Mechanism for informal exchange of ideas for international community*

A member supported an informal exchange of ideas to facilitate the development of fair and equitable deceased donor programs globally. The member stated that understanding the barriers in other countries will increase knowledge, and expressed the importance of sharing best practices. The member stated the Committee should establish a project to aid in teaching the intricacies of the United States' organ procurement and transplant system to other countries and how to develop their own.

Another member agreed and added support for establishing channels to start conversation between countries that seek to develop their deceased donor programs. The member also stated that as preservation techniques improve, it may become important to exchange organs outside of the United States.

HRSA staff stated that surgical fellows from other countries have previously traveled to the United States to learn more. HRSA staff asked if this idea seeks to create a more formalized system through the government. A member confirmed. HRSA staff stated they would follow up regarding this idea.

A member stated that a goal of this project idea may be to review how other countries are increasing living and deceased donors.

Another member suggested a few countries such as Mexico, India, or North Africa, to analyze their current transplant systems. The member also suggested contacting a colleague in Saudi Arabia to review data on their system.

The Chair suggested that one topic to review is Korea and living donation, specifically the living liver donor programs. The Chair stated that the informal exchange of ideas may be beneficial to address the gaps within the United States.

A member asked whether UNOS has an inventory of countries that have requested help in developing their transplant systems. The member suggested that the Committee could create a document which outlines the development of a fair and equitable transplant system for developing countries.

Another member mentioned the International Registry on Organ Donation and Transplantation (IRODaT), a Spanish database which tracks living and deceased donors and transplants around the world. The member mentioned it may be beneficial for the Committee to review this annual report. The member asked for more information regarding the process of what happens when another country contacts UNOS for information on the organ procurement and transplant network.

HRSA staff reiterated that the Committee's project will need to be within the confines and constraints of the OPTN contract and other regulatory structures. HRSA staff stated that while fostering the development of other deceased donor programs may be a good idea, it does not align with tasks outlined in the OPTN contract.

*Project Idea: Improving mechanism for follow up of international patients undergoing transplants within U.S. transplant program*

A member stated that the advent of telehealth could help the follow up for patients who leave the country after receiving a transplant. The Chair asked whether any Committee members' institutions are utilizing telehealth for follow up with international patients. One member responded that during the COVID-19 pandemic telehealth was utilized for some patients that were outside of the United States. A member added that follow-up of international living donors is also important to address within this project idea. The member stated that the Committee should first understand how international patients are tracked and monitored.

*Project Idea: Focus on bringing attention to the Committee's work (newsletter, periodic email update)*

The Chair suggested this project idea may be best paired with another project idea, in order for a greater benefit. The Chair suggested that through a medium, the transplant community could be reminded that should they have any questions regarding international patients, they may be addressed through the Committee. The Chair suggested that the use of telehealth, and its benefit and challenges, may also be an important topic to share. A member suggested that a newsletter could also address various countries and highlight their deceased donor programs.

*Project Idea: Kidney Paired Donation (KPD) with Canada*

A member mentioned that the University of Winnipeg and the University of Minnesota have an agreement to allow highly sensitized patients from the University of Winnipeg to be evaluated and listed at the University of Minnesota. After the transplant, the care transitions back to the referring transplant program in Canada at the time of hospital discharge.

Another member mentioned that the United States should develop a national KPD program before cross border sharing.

*Project Idea: Sharing of organs across geographically contiguous (and 500 nautical miles with air) territories and United States.*

A member stated that this project idea pairs with international KPD. The member stated it may be more beneficial to start with international KPD, and have this idea follow.

Next steps:

The Committee will continue discussing potential project ideas.

**Upcoming Meetings**

- March 22, 2022 (teleconference)
- April 26, 2022 (teleconference)
- May 25, 2022 (teleconference)

## Attendance

- **Committee Members**
  - Abby Ruiz
  - Barry Friedman
  - Chang Liu
  - Howard Nathan
  - Min Zhou
  - Prakash Rao
  - Peter Stock
  - Samy Riad
  - Sylvia Villalon
- **HRSA Representatives**
  - Jim Bowman
  - Marilyn Levi
- **SRTR Staff**
  - Bryn Thompson
- **UNOS Staff**
  - Kim Uccellini
  - Meghan McDermott
  - Robert Hunter