

**OPTN Heart Committee  
Meeting Summary  
January 16, 2024  
Conference Call**

**Richard Daly, MD, Chair  
J.D. Menteer, MD, Vice Chair**

## **Introduction**

The Heart Committee (“Committee”) met via WebEx teleconference on 01/16/2024 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Filtering Heart Organ Offers
2. Expedited Placement Variance

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

### **1. Filtering Heart Organ Offers**

The Committee reviewed the applicability of adding heart donor offer filters, along the lines of how donor offer filters were developed and implemented to assist kidney transplant programs with their decision-making.

#### Data summary:

The OPTN Contractor led a presentation on donor offer filters for heart programs. The proposed offer filter tool allows transplant programs to apply program-specific filters to bypass unwanted donor offers. Examples demonstrated how filters can be applied based on donor age, distance, and candidate criteria. An overview of the first phase of implementation was demonstrated, emphasizing the flexibility and dashboard functionality associated with managing the offer filters.

OPTN Contractor staff explained how the modeling process works to reflect each transplant programs’ past donor organ acceptance and non-acceptance practices. Staff wanted to highlight that the potential filters only reject donor offers based on the circumstances under which an individual program has consistently declined offers. Based on the OPTN Contractor’s analysis, model results indicated one of the recommended offer filters would apply to a significant percentage of heart programs based on past practices. Examples of recommended filters were showcased, revealing varying criteria and their impact on received offers.

The tool provides programs with their own historical data and allows programs to activate recommended filters in order to observe how offers the programs received may have changed if the filters had been in place. A brief demonstration illustrated how programs can assess the impact of filters on offer volume and identify potential missed opportunities. Detailed information about individual offers, including donor factors and acceptance status, can be accessed.

The anticipated timeline for the phase 1 release of heart offer filters is May 2024, following the upcoming release for lung programs.

### Summary of discussion:

A member inquired about the feature to review past filtered results and declined donors, which OPTN Contractor staff addressed, explaining that the screen displays only offers filtered by the activated filters, including both accepted and declined offers.

Another member asked about the distinction between offer filters and donor acceptance criteria. OPTN Contractor staff clarified that offer filters operate before donor offer interaction, while acceptance criteria apply during the match generation process. Members also asked whether declined offers bypassed by the filters count against program metrics. OPTN Contractor staff explained that offer filters exclude such offers from acceptance metrics due to the system's application of a bypass code.

Further questions delved into the modeling process for recommended filters, the notification process for programs, and the default implementation of kidney filters. Staff explained that recommended filters are tailored for each transplant program and can be reviewed and adjusted before implementation. OPTN Contractor staff also discussed the plan to implement default kidney filters in 2024 and clarified that heart program evaluation is currently ongoing without default filters.

The discussion concluded with participants expressing appreciation for the insights provided and the potential impact of the filters on organ placement efficiency. The Chair encouraged members to reach out with further questions or feedback, emphasizing ongoing support and collaboration in refining the system for the community's benefit.

### Next steps:

Staff will provide updates on the heart offer filters project as applicable.

## **2. Expedited Placement Variance**

On behalf of the OPTN Executive Committee, OPTN Contractor staff shared an update on the expedited placement variance that was available for special public comment.

### Data summary:

The presentation focused on a proposal sponsored by the OPTN Executive Committee aimed at expediting organ placement to enhance utilization and prevent non-use. The presenter outlined the proposal's purpose and structure, highlighting its alignment with the work of the OPTN Expeditious Task Force. The proposal, currently undergoing a special public comment period, seeks to create a variance for testing expedited placement protocols, particularly for abdominal organs, addressing concerns about increasing rates of out-of-sequence allocation. The presenter clarified key terms such as variance, protocols, and criteria for expedited placement, emphasizing the need for time-limited, experimental policies authorized by the Final Rule. The open variance for expedited placements allows member participation without obligation, with approved protocols accessible online for opt-in consideration.

Specific protocols under the variance must define organ and candidate eligibility criteria, conditions for expedited placement use, and hospital responsibilities, while complying with legal requirements. The presenter discussed the proposed 18-month timeframe for the variance and potential changes to existing variance policies, including protocol creation and reporting frequency.

The presenter concluded by highlighting upcoming public comment opportunities and the significance of the values prioritization exercise in informing future decisions. The presentation underscored the collaborative effort to address organ placement challenges and optimize allocation processes for the benefit of transplant patients and the healthcare community. It was also mentioned that gathering

community feedback about protocols might lend itself to the Values Prioritization Exercise that the Committee is currently using to gather information about the Continuous Distribution of Hearts effort.

Summary of discussion:

A Committee member discussed existing protocols for expediting organ placement, which often involve reaching out to transplant centers within a designated service area or distance from the donor hospital. These protocols are typically triggered by urgent situations such as late turndowns or time-sensitive organ conditions. Some centers have established their own expedited processes to ensure rapid communication and decision-making among transplant teams when accepting offers for organs. They appreciated the Executive Committee's work in standardizing those processes.

A Committee member highlighted the significant challenge of late turndowns, where transplant centers decline organ offers at the last minute. Because of their timing, late turndowns result in the organ being unavailable for use by another program. Late turndowns can occur due to various reasons, including concerns about organ quality, recipient compatibility, or logistical constraints. A second Committee member shared strategies for managing late turndowns, such as promptly contacting alternative transplant centers to find willing recipients and minimize organ non-use.

The discussion also touched upon the logistical aspects of expedited organ placement, such as transportation logistics, communication systems, and allocation algorithms. Members emphasized the importance of ensuring efficient and reliable transportation networks to facilitate timely organ delivery to transplant centers. Additionally, they discussed the need for robust communication systems to coordinate organ offers and recipient acceptance quickly and accurately.

Next steps:

Staff will share the Committee's feedback for the special public comment session.

**Upcoming Meeting**

- February 7, 2024

## Attendance

- **Committee Members**
  - Rocky Daly
  - J.D. Menteer
  - Amrut Ambardekar
  - Kim Baltierra
  - Jennifer Carapellucci
  - Jennifer Cowger
  - Tim Gong
  - Eman Hamad
  - Jennifer Hartman
  - Glen Kelley
  - Earl Lovell
  - John Nigro
  - Martha Tankersley
  - Dmitry Yaranov
- **HRSA Representatives**
  - Jim Bowman
  - Marilyn Levi
- **SRTR Staff**
  - Yoon Son Ahn
  - Katie Audette
  - Monica Colvin
  - Grace Lyden
- **UNOS Staff**
  - Cole Fox
  - Kelsi Lindblad
  - Alina Martinez
  - Carlos Martinez
  - Rob McTier
  - Eric Messick
  - Lumar Schmitt
  - Holly Sobczak
  - Kaitlin Swanner
  - Sara Rose Wells
- **Other Attendees**
  - Shelley Hall
  - Samantha Taylor
  - Daniel Yip