

OPTN Ad Hoc International Relations Committee

Meeting Summary

April 26, 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 04/26/2022 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Discussion: Project Ideas

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

1. Discussion: Project Ideas

The Committee worked to refine their project idea.

Summary of discussion:

A member asked whether the project's goal should increase the number of organs available in the United States. Staff responded that OPTN committee projects should align with a strategic goal, and increasing the number of transplants is one of the strategic goals.

The Committee discussed the topic of surgeons receiving additional training outside of the United States. A member stated they did not believe this topic aligns with the OPTN's strategic goals. The Chair stated that the Committee could consider how to ensure the United States has ample programs to train surgeons. The Chair added that living liver donor programs may be of interest to the Committee. A member stated that this would align more with the strategic goal regarding improving living donor safety. The member stated that their program used to send surgical fellows to Korea for living liver donor transplant experience. The member added that the Committee could gain a lot of knowledge by reviewing international practices regarding living liver donation.

A member suggested gaining an understanding of different religious beliefs and how that may potentially contribute to increasing organ donation. The member stated that in Iran, the organ donation program was developed after the Ayatollah issued a ruling that stated organ donation was the best thing to do for the fellow man.¹ The member added that this increased deceased donation in Iran and ultimately changed the whole organ donation program in that country.

Another member asked whether there are guidelines for international living donors who travel to the United States to donate. The Chair stated there is no OPTN policy, and it is the transplant program's discretion on accepting international living donors. The member responded that their transplant program has increased conversations regarding international living donors. The Chair suggested that the Committee may be able to provide education on this topic.

¹ B Lankarani K, Malek Hosseinin SA. The Situation of Liver Transplantation Programs in Iran. *Middle East J Dig Dis* 2018;10:194-195. doi: 10.15171/mejdd.2018.111.

The Chair stated that the Committee has the opportunity to learn from international transplant communities and share findings with the transplant community within the United States.

A member stated that facilitating the development of deceased organ donation systems in other countries will aide in reducing problems with organ trade. The member stated that while this is a beneficial project for the Committee to undertake, it does not align with the strategic goals of the OPTN. The Chair stated that it may align with the strategic goal of improving living donor and transplant recipient safety. Staff responded that the Committee project will need to align with the authority given through the National Organ Transplant Act (NOTA) and the OPTN Final Rule. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) staff stated that approval of such a project will depend on the structure and if it aligns with the statutory and regulatory scope of the OPTN and the contract. A member clarified that the idea would be to have international transplant communities come to the United States to seek facilitation of an ethical transplant system.

The Chair suggested the Committee may summarize best practices related to living and deceased donation and host a webinar.

Another member suggested reviewing transplant programs that accept international living donors and summarizing best practices of those programs to further living donor safety and ensure follow-up.

The Chair stated that other considerations may be important as well, such as histocompatibility testing. A member responded that their program would request repeat testing if the initial tests were performed outside of the United States. The member stated that their transplant program feels more comfortable with United States programs who follow very stringent quality assurance and quality control guidelines.

Another member stated that the review of transplant programs that accept international living donors may also include common barriers. The member stated that should the review of transplant programs reveal a common barrier, it may necessitate the development of infrastructure in the future.

The Committee agreed this is an appropriate topic and project for the Committee to undertake.

The Chair stated that the Committee may be interested in reviewing best practices related to donation after circulatory death. Staff stated that the Committee may undertake these topics in a series.

Next steps:

The Committee will continue to refine project scope.

Upcoming Meetings

- May 24, 2022 (teleconference)
- June 28, 2022 (teleconference)

Attendance

- **Committee Members**
 - Abby Ruiz
 - Barry Friedman
 - Min Zhou
 - Nancy Long
 - Peter Stock
 - Prakash Rao
 - Samy Raid
- **SRTR Representatives**
 - Bryn Thompson
- **HRSA Representatives**
 - Jim Bowman
 - Marilyn Levi
- **UNOS Staff**
 - Kim Uccellini
 - Meghan McDermott
- **Other Attendees**
 - Scott Sanoff