

**OPTN Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee
National Liver Review Board (NLRB) Subcommittee
Meeting Summary
July 14, 2022
Conference Call**

James Trotter, MD, Chair

Introduction

The OPTN National Liver Review Board Subcommittee (the Subcommittee) met via Citrix GoToMeeting teleconference on 07/14/2022 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Introduction to the National Liver Review Board (NLRB) Subcommittee
2. NLRB: 2 Year Monitoring Report
3. Ongoing Review of NLRB Diagnoses: Liver-Intestine Candidates

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

1. Introduction to the National Liver Review Board (NLRB) Subcommittee

The members were oriented to the work of the Subcommittee

There were no questions or comments.

2. NLRB: 2 Year Monitoring Report

The Subcommittee reviewed data 2 years pre-NLRB and 2 year post-acuity circles (AC). The pre-policy era is data from May 13, 2017 – May 13, 2019; The post-policy era is data from February 4, 2020 – February 3, 2022. Data from May 14, 2019 – February 3, 202 are excluded.

Summary of discussion:

The Chair questioned why the overall number of submitted exceptions has decreased. A member noted that for a period of time, at their transplant program, fewer patients were being referred for transplant. The member added this might have caused a downstream effect. Another member noted that their transplant program has seen a decrease in the number hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) candidates being added to the waitlist. Data from the 2 year monitoring report showed that 6,521 initial exception request forms were submitted for HCC pre-policy, and 6,965 initial exception request forms were submitted for HCC post-policy. The Chair noted the decrease in HCC candidates does not appear to be a national trend.

Data from the 2 year monitoring report showed a decrease in initial exception request forms submitted for "other, specify" diagnosis (n = 4,982 pre-policy; n = 2,142 post-policy). A member noted that this decrease may be related to transplant programs not submitting exceptions because they assume it would not be approved. The Subcommittee reasoned this may be related to the overall decrease in number of submitted exceptions.

It was noted that for the analysis on *initial and extension request forms submitted by specialty review board, case outcome, and era*, some of the pre-policy numbers were exceptions that were submitted near the end of the pre-policy era cohort but then reviewed during the post-policy era.

The Chair noted that 56 percent of cases are approved after a previous denial. Staff responded that a prior analysis of pediatric cases that were denied and then resubmitted showed that upon resubmission the case contained more information in the narrative or more detail on clinical values.

The Subcommittee noted that the liver-alone waitlist dropout rates among non-exception cases and exception cases are more aligned in the post-policy era. The Chair concluded that the data presented represents that the NLRB has been an improvement to the system since its establishment.

3. Ongoing Review for NLRB Diagnoses: Liver-Intestine Candidates

The Subcommittee discussed updates to policy and guidance for liver-intestine candidates.

Summary of discussion:

Liver-intestine candidates:

The Subcommittee reviewed data from a research article¹ and data from the 2 year monitoring report for acuity circles.

A member suggested reviewing comparable Model for End Stage Liver Disease (MELD) scores for liver-alone candidates and mortality rates. Another member stated that access to higher quality organs for liver-intestine candidates is the goal, therefore mortality may not be an accurate comparator.

Another member noted that liver-intestine candidates are receiving a lower number of exception points than they previously were assigned.

Next steps:

The Subcommittee will continue to discuss priority for liver-intestine candidates.

Upcoming Meeting

- August 11, 2022 @ 2:30 PM ET (teleconference)
- September 8, 2022 @ 2:30 PM ET (teleconference)

¹ Tommy Ivanics et al. "Impact of the Acuity Circle Model for Liver Allocation on Multivisceral Transplant Candidates," *American Journal of Transplantation* 22, no. 2 (2021): pp. 464-473, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajt.16803>.

Attendance

- **Subcommittee Members**
 - Allison Kwong
 - Jim Trotter
 - Neil Shah
 - Sophoclis Alexopoulos
- **HRSA Representatives**
 - Jim Bowman
 - Marilyn Levi
- **SRTR Staff**
 - Katherine Audette
- **UNOS Staff**
 - Betsy Gans
 - Erin Schnellinger
 - Julia Foutz
 - Matt Cafarella
 - Meghan McDermott
 - Niyati Upadhyay
 - Sarah Scott