

**OPTN/UNOS Ad Hoc Geography Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2018
Conference Call**

Kevin O'Connor, MS, PA, Chair

Introduction

The OPTN/UNOS Ad Hoc Geography Committee met via teleconference on 02/12/2018 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Polling Results for Organ Distribution Statements
2. Top Organ Distribution Statements Discussion

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

1. Polling Results for Organ Distribution Statements

Summary of discussion:

The Committee Chair "Chair" introduced the polling results for the organ distribution statements reviewed by the Committee. There was a 95 percent response rate for committee members. The Chair stated that several of the included statements were identified as having the greatest amount of support by committee members. The Chair reiterated that organ distribution and organ allocation have some overlap but are distinct, and for the purposes of this Committee the focus is on distribution. Additionally, alignment with the Final Rule, the principles of equity and utility, and then equitable access for all populations are important components of the Committee's discussions. A committee member spoke to the importance of keeping the Final Rule in mind at all times with the work of this committee.

A summary of the polling results indicated the 6 principle statements that were supported the most by the polling. A committee member asked for clarification on how the weighted averages assigned to the principles were developed. UNOS staff stated that the weighted averages were based on a Likert scale of one through five, with "five" being representative of strongly agreeing with the principle.

2. Top Organ Distribution Statements Discussion

Summary of Discussion:

The Chair introduced six statements that were voted upon by the Committee to "keep". These include:

- 1) The effect of organ travel on cold ischemic time and organ quality within each organ type should be taken into account in organ distribution.
- 2) The potential impact on organ utilization (e.g., discard rate) should be taken into account in organ distribution.
- 3) Organ distribution policy should aim to reduce inherent differences in potential donor supply and demand (as continually assessed) across the country.
- 4) Deceased donor organs should be considered a national resource, not primarily a resource meant for recipients in the community from which the deceased donor lived.
- 5) Organ distribution should aim to reduce increased travel of organs for similarly situated patients.

- 6) Only travel time expected to have a meaningful impact on organ quality should be taken into account in organ distribution.

For the first principle, the Chair commented that there appeared to be widespread support for the effect of cold ischemic time and organ quality with regards to organ distribution. A committee member stated that advances in cold ischemic time and organ preservation should be taken into account with the future in mind. The Chair stated there was strong support for maximizing the utilization of the organ supply (principle two). The third statement regarding donor supply and demand was discussed by the Committee. A committee member stated that the Liver Committee discussed supply and demand extensively and it's important to understand the complexity in defining the true supply and demand. It was stated that there was not a uniform opinion on what the definition of supply and demand is for any organs.

There was strong support by the committee members regarding organs being considered a national resource. A committee members stated that this sentiment is already present due to some DSAs not having specific organ programs. The example was given that in DSAs with only kidney programs, thoracic and other abdominal organs are already traveling outside their local area to recipients. The Chair stated that this principle doesn't mean that all organs can be offered nationally the same way, but more that this principle allows us to think of organ distribution outside of just local considerations. A committee member reiterated their preference for using "community" versus "local" since local has the connotation of the DSA. The next statement regarding reducing travel for similarly situated patients (medical urgency) was met with discussion. A committee member stated that this principle crosses over into allocation more than the other principles and that the committee should be thoughtful about this principle moving forward, so as to not get into the details of allocation by medical criteria. For the final of the 6 top principles, a committee member stated that the use of "only" might suggest that travel time considerations were only limited to organ quality, and not also the impact of travel on logistics and costs. Another committee member commented on the use of "meaningful" and that this could be interpreted in many ways. The Chair stated that he was in agreement with these two comments and that this statement would be re-worded to avoid confusion if it was decided to be a final principle from the committee.

A committee member asked if there was a target number of principles to reach as part of this effort. The Chair stated that there was not a specific number or threshold. Another committee member remarked that of the final six, there would likely be one or more that could be condensed into one principle. The committee voted to keep the six statements as defined organ distribution principles. It was stated that these were not final in their current form and principles may be combined or slightly edited based on feedback from the group.

The Committee then discussed the statements voted by the committee to "discuss" based on the committee's agreement. The principle that distribution policies should aim to reduce the need for multi-listing of candidates was discussed by the Committee. A committee member stated they were neutral on this principle because the other principles will have the intended effect to reduce multi-listing so a distinct principle on this is not necessary. The committee discussed the principle to distribute more broadly for highly prioritized candidates, and less broadly for less prioritized candidates. Committee members stated this was already in place in distribution policies, for example Share35 that distributes broadly to the highest MELD candidates. Committee members discussed that this statement was important, but perhaps more in-depth of a concept than to be included as an over-arching principle. The Chair commented that he would coordinate with others to re-work this statement into the 6 "keep" principles previously voted on. The statement to allow fixed geographic boundaries was not viewed to be a principle by the group.

The statement regarding concern for logistics was not viewed as an over-arching principle. A committee member stated that the logistics statement, and the statement about costs are linked and could be combined. The committee discussed this and a committee member stated that the costs/logistics should not drive the principles, instead the principle should drive the logistics and costs. Several other committees expressed their belief that considering costs as a principle would be very important. The Chair recommended that there could be a preamble to the principles that acknowledge the need to consider costs and logistics of distribution. Committee members reiterated that “resources” may be better than costs in order to capture everything that would be affected with broader distribution.

The committee voted on these past five statements on whether to recommend they move forwards toward being defined organ distribution principles. UNOS staff stated that they would follow-up with the Committee members on the voting results and the next steps with these potential principles.

A committee member spoke about the statement regarding relationships between OPOs and local transplant centers as being taken into account in organ distribution. The member stated that older donors and DCD donors are largely utilized in the local confines, and that broader distribution of this subset of donors may actually reduce utilization. A committee member stated that anything “historic” would not be dynamic and foster the need for new relationships to be cultivated. It was discussed that utilization is important, but as a principle, this could be incorporated in the principle about utilization and reducing discards.

Upcoming Meetings

- February 26, 2018 Teleconference
- March 20, 2018 Teleconference
- March 26 and 27, 2018 in-person meeting in Chicago