

OPTN Ethics Committee

Meeting Summary

May 16, 2024

Webex Meeting

Andy Flescher, PhD, Chair
Sanjay Kulkarni, MD, Vice Chair

Introduction

The Ethics Committee (“Committee”) met via WebEx teleconference on 05/16/2024 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Project Purpose
2. Presentation – Ethical Considerations in Out of Sequence Allocations
3. Presentation – Out of Sequence Allocations

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

1. Project Purpose

No decisions were made.

Summary of presentation:

The Vice Chair reviewed the Allocation Out of Sequence project purpose, specifically regarding the ethical implications of rescue pathways and their impacts on disparities in organ transplantation. The Vice Chair highlighted that rescue pathways are possible ways for Organ Procurement Organizations (OPOs) to save organs from non-use while also acknowledging the necessity of equity and transparency in the process.

Next steps:

None

2. Presentation – Ethical Considerations in Out of Sequence Allocations

No decisions were made.

Presentation Summary:

An expert in the field gave a presentation on Ethical Analysis on Allocation Out of Sequence to the Committee. The presenter acknowledged balances of utility and maximum benefits along with respect for persons, or equal moral concern. The presenter considered open offers and how they should apply to primary centers with previous declinations. The presenter also considered who is the “most disadvantaged” recipient, and which factors should be considered for this decision, such as Model for End-Stage Liver Disease (MELD) and/or current hospitalization. Lastly, the presenter listed factors that may increase disadvantage, such as distance, language, Orthotopic Liver Transplant (OLT), or familiarity with surgeon, among others.

Summary of Discussion:

In reference to ethical principles, a committee member asked if the committee will be looking at both ethical principles and system issues. The Chair responded that the Ethics Committee does not dictate policy change and will look at the issue through balancing principles. The presenter stated that guidance in choosing recipients within one's own center would be helpful. Also, the presenter mentioned that system perspective and transplant center perspective should both be areas of interest. The Vice Chair agreed that system and transplant perspectives are both important.

Next Steps:

None

3. Presentation – Out of Sequence Allocations

No decisions were made.

Presentation Summary:

A former Policy Oversight Committee and Kidney Transplantation Committee Chair discussed possible areas of change for decreasing disparities in out of sequence allocations. The presenter reviewed organ allocation policy regarding potential transplant recipients and the kidney allocation system. The presenter highlighted the rising number of allocation deviations since 2017. The presentation covered "better than dialysis" kidneys, or kidneys used by some OPOs for expedited placement if certain criteria is met – kidney donor profile index greater than 75%, donation after circulatory death from a donor over 55 years old, donation after brain death from a donor over 65 years old, terminal creatinine greater than 2.5, and/or kidney biopsy is greater than 20% glomerulosclerosis.

The presenter stated that transparency, trust, and system vetting are areas for change, and that this should be done while also maximizing organ utilization, improving efficiency, and maintaining/improving equity, along with continuing expedited placement. Areas of concern include OPO independent databases, OPO allocation schemes, and match runs not being followed. Overall, the presenter stated disparities are increasing and trust in the match run can be affected.

The presenter suggested re-establishing allocation order then developing an expedited placement pathway within the current kidney allocation system to develop a baseline from which to gauge change. Following this, the presenter suggested that variances could be created from the OPTN Expeditious Taskforce, while cautioning against the current rescue pathway proposal which is similar to "better than dialysis" kidneys. Her suggestion included safety net priority for Sequence D and rescued kidneys, while more immediate solutions included rescue pathways for all sequences.

Summary of Discussion:

The Chair asked what is currently happening regarding the relationship between OPOs and transplant centers. The presenter responded that all centers should be able to be on the "aggressive," or responsive expedited placement list, and from there it could be determined if the center needs to remain on the list for a specific organ. The Vice Chair mentioned a previously unsuccessful OPTN project in which transplant centers that accepted high-risk organ placements were identified. The Vice Chair asked the presenter about the implications of this project. The presenter responded that identifying these centers does not make an impact, and instead, the system needs to be reorganized. The presenter stated that acceptable cold ischemia times should not be a barrier to placement. A committee member

asked why transplant center acceptance history isn't used, and the presenter responded that some centers, such as new centers, are disadvantaged by this practice.

Next Steps:

The Committee did not have time in the meeting to review the allocation out of sequence data request. Members will review and submit feedback via email before finalization.

Upcoming Meeting(s)

- June 20, 2024

Attendance

- **Committee Members**
 - Sena Wilson-Sheehan
 - Sanjay Kulkarni
 - Bob Troug
 - Keren Ladin
 - Andy Flescher
 - Andrew Courtwright
 - Erica Stohs
 - Sheila Bullock
 - Jennifer Dillon
 - Laura Jokimaki
 - Laura McCown
 - Lisa Paolillo
 - Thao Galvan
 - Megan Urbanski
- **HRSA Representatives**
 - Patrick Mauro
 - Jim Bowman
- **SRTR Staff**
 - Bryn Thompson
- **UNOS Staff**
 - Laura Schmitt
 - Kristina Hogan
 - Kieran McMahon
 - Katrina Gauntt
 - Jamie Panko
 - James Alcorn
 - Cole Fox
- **Other Attendees**
 - Oluwafisayo Adebisi
 - Nicole Turgeon
 - Gloria Chen
 - Grace Lee-Riddle
 - Aite Aigbe