

**OPTN Policy Oversight Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 23, 2019
Conference Call**

**Jennifer Milton, BSN, CCTC, MBA, Chair
Alex Glazier, JD, MPH, Vice Chair**

Introduction

The OPTN Policy Oversight Committee (POC) met via Citrix GoToTraining teleconference/ on April 23, 2019 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Committee projects review: Modifications to Pediatric Heart Allocation Project
2. Changing the way POC Functions
3. Wrap up and upcoming meetings

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

1. Committee projects review: Modifications to Pediatric Heart Allocation Project

POC members discussed the few comments made regarding this project, including goal alignment, other possible solutions and regional review board structuring. Overall, the POC members voiced support for this project, and voted unanimously to allow it to proceed to the Executive Committee.

Summary of discussion:

The Vice Chair of the Thoracic Committee (hence referred to as "Vice Chair") addressed POC concerns, including a larger issue with exception requests and a suggestion to restructure the Regional Review Boards (RRBs). The Vice Chair stated that the Thoracic Committee had considered other potential solutions. However, the Committee chose to focus on creating a pediatric national heart review board. While other issues may with exception requests, the Committee wants to keep the project scope narrow. In terms of RRB restructuring, the Vice Chair informed POC members that pediatric and adult populations are very different. Most heart RRBs are composed of adult heart cardiologists, who have expressed concerns about making decisions on pediatric exception cases. By creating a national heart review board, pediatric exceptions will then be reviewed by pediatric cardiologists, and will thereby increase consistency across the regions.

One POC member asked whether the increase in pediatric exceptions was caused by the recent changes to the heart allocation system in October 2018. The Vice Chair clarified that this project is not directly attributable to these recent heart policy changes. This project is of importance to the Committee separate from the adult heart policy changes.

The majority of POC members agreed that the project aligns most with the OPTN Strategic Goal number two to "increase equity in access to transplants". There were questions why the Thoracic Committee categorized this project under "improve waitlisted patient, living donor, and transplant recipient outcomes". UNOS staff clarified that there was discussion regarding goal alignment, however to maintain consistency with the liver RRB project, goal two was recommended. Committee members did not feel strongly for either goal. Furthermore, the Thoracic Committee was concerned that the exception pathway may be allowing less medically urgent candidates to be transplanted at the expense of status 1A candidates qualifying by standard criteria.

The POC voted on: “What do you recommend for the Thoracic Committee’s Project: Modifications to Pediatric Heart Allocation?” (8 yes, 0 no, 0 abstained).

Next Steps:

The POC will recommend formally that the Executive Committee approve the project at its future meeting to be scheduled in July.

2. Changing the way POC Functions

The POC Vice Chair provided members with an update on functional changes within the POC.

Summary of discussion:

The Vice Chair provided members with a brief overview of the current POC role which includes:

- Policy proposals reviewed individually
- Focus on resources and goal category scoring
- Does not set or support larger strategic policy direction

The process of the POC has currently been one by one determination of policy proposals rather than as a whole. As a result, there have been difficulties in the POC being able to support a larger strategic policy direction for the OPTN cross-committee work.

The Vice Chair continued by explaining the vision of the POC role in the future. The goal is to have the POC, in collaboration with UNOS staff, leadership and the OPTN Board, identify and agree on policy priorities from an upstream approach. This process would allow for development, review, passage, and implementation of a coordinated set of policy changes and allowing for larger issues to be addressed.

The Vice Chair acknowledged that moving the POC to this type of process will involve a transitional period. The POC will begin to identify some strategic priorities for the OPTN that will support significant system improvement through the proposed coordinated policy development process. The goal is to have a portfolio prepared 12-18 months ahead of public comment and Board approval. Within a timeframe, there can be cross-committee work that is better facilitated and aligned toward one particular goal.

The Vice Chair continued by acknowledging that there will be some project proposals that will happen or need to happen that will be outside of the set priority, however the goal is to allow the system to address larger system-wide issues. This will require identifying strategic policy priorities separate from the goal categories. The proposed changes will be discussed in more detail during the in-person meeting in May.

A member asked if additional lawsuits were anticipated. The Vice Chair stated that the proposed vision for the POC is completely separate from lawsuits regarding geographic distribution. It is not expected that the POC would recommend geographic distribution as a policy priority because addressing this issue is well underway already. The Vice Chair provided examples of potential future policy priorities such as reducing organ discards and improving operational and financial efficiencies with broader distribution. After priority identification, proposals to address the chosen priority would be solicited from all Committees.

Another member asked when identifying strategic policy priorities, does this pertain to projects that support these priorities as well? The Vice Chair stated that the POC (together with UNOS and OPTN leadership) would develop the policy priorities. Members would provide this information to their respective Committees and discuss the policy priorities. Committees would then develop proposals that are within their current scope and align with the priority.

3. Wrap up and upcoming meetings

UNOS staff gave an overview of the agenda for the May POC meeting which will be held in Richmond, Virginia at UNOS headquarters. The first day will be an orientation for new Policy Oversight Committee (POC) members. The second day will be focused on reviewing the current project portfolio and continuing the discussion of POC functions.

Upcoming Meeting

- May 9-10, 2019 (Richmond, VA)