

OPTN Living Donor Committee

Meeting Summary

April 8, 2020

Conference Call

Randy Schaffer, MD, Chair

Heather Hunt, JD, Vice Chair

Introduction

The Living Donor Committee met via Citrix GoToTraining teleconference on 04/08/2020 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. COVID-19 Discussion
2. Living Donor Committee VCA Project Update
3. Federal Register Notice: Eligibility Guidelines

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

1. COVID-19 Discussion

The Committee was informed of some OPTN emergency policy actions in response to COVID-19.

Summary of Data:

The Committee was informed of some OPTN emergency policy actions in response to COVID-19. The policy actions relax data submission requirements for the Living Donor Follow-Up (LDF) forms. The intent of the policy change is to prevent unnecessary exposure risk to transplant recipients and living donors, and also to alleviate data burden for centers in the midst of COVID-19 crisis. The suspension of these requirements is backdated to March 13, 2020 and will expire on September 30, 2020 if the Executive Committee or Board of Directors has not acted before that date. Living donor deaths will still need to be reported in the Protecting Patient Safety Portal in UNetSM.

Summary of Discussion

A Committee member asked if there are mechanisms in place to collect COVID related issues for donors as there are for recipients. The Committee was informed COVID has been added to "pathogens of special interest" for reporting of donor events. The Committee was also informed of COVID resources and available data that can be found on the UNOS website. The Committee expressed interest in seeing data on how many programs are still conducting living donor transplants.

The Committee held a discussion on how the COVID-19 crisis is affecting them and their hospitals. A number of committee members said their hospitals had halted their living donor transplants and limited their evaluations. Some other programs are still conducting living donor transplants although being selective on which ones are scheduled. A number of committee members also reported doing more telehealth evaluations.

Next Steps

The UNOS website will be updated daily with the latest COVID related data and information.

2. Federal Register Notice: Eligibility Guidelines

The Committee reviewed the recently released Federal Register Notice on Eligibility Guidelines for the National Living Donor Assistance Center Program.

Summary of data:

A Federal Register Notice was posted by the Department of Health and Human Services entitled “Reimbursement of Travel and Subsistence Expenses toward Living Organ Donation Program Eligibility Guidelines”. The proposed rulemaking would:

- Increase household income eligibility threshold to 350 percent (currently, the threshold is 300 percent) for living organ donors and organ recipients
- Clarify the use of the existing preference categories in relation to the proposed income eligibility threshold. The Proposal is for the Program to accept applications primarily from preference category 1. However, the Program may accept applications from each subsequent category as funds become available.
- Amend the qualifying expenses section of the eligibility guidelines to allow the Program to reimburse eligible non-directed donors for qualifying expenses

Summary of discussion:

The Committee agreed the increase to 350 percent is too conservative and alternatively supports ACOT’s recommendation to increase the limit to 500 percent. The Committee also believed the link between donor and recipient income should be removed. Also, there should be special consideration for donors and recipients who rely on the same household income (ex. spouse to spouse, parent to child) and donors who also serve as caregivers to their recipients. The Committee supports the proposal to expand Program eligibility to non-directed donors.

Next Steps

The Committee’s feedback will be compiled along with feedback from the Patient Affairs Committee to draft a response to the notice which will be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval.

3. Living Donor Committee VCA Project Update

The Committee received a brief update on the progress of the Living Donor Committee VCA Project Workgroup. The Workgroup has met twice and started going through Policy 14 to evaluate the addition of VCA and uterine specific elements where appropriate. A draft of the policy changes will be presented to the full committee on April 20.

Upcoming Meetings

- April 20 – Virtual Meeting
- May 20 - Teleconference