

## **OPTN Ethics Committee**

### **Meeting Summary**

**July 15, 2021**

**Conference Call**

**Keren Ladin, PhD, Chair**

**Andrew Flescher, PhD, Vice Chair**

### **Introduction**

The Ethics Committee met via Citrix GoToMeeting teleconference on 07/15/2021 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. New Committee Member Greetings
2. Onboarding and Continuing Education Reminder
3. Public Comment and Regional Meetings
4. Update on Continuous Distribution – Continuous Distribution Framework presentation

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

#### **1. New Committee Member Greetings**

The Chair welcomed the new members to the first Committee meeting of their three year term. UNOS staff introduced the Committee Leadership, Regional Representatives, At-Large Representatives, and Visting Board Member. UNOS staff confirmed the change of date for the In-Person Meeting to October 29, 2021 at the Chicago Hilton O'Hare.

#### **2. Onboarding and Continuing Education Reminder**

UNOS staff reminded the Committee that all new and returning members must complete continuing education modules in UNOS Connect, sign the conflict of interest document, and sign the confidentiality agreement. Please reach out to UNOS staff with any questions.

#### **3. Public Comment and Regional Meetings**

Public Comment begins on August 3, 2021 and runs until September 30, 2021. Each region will have an in person regional meeting during public comment. The Committee's white paper, *Ethical Considerations of Continuous Distribution in Organ Allocation*, is on the non-discussion agenda so members will not need to present at the regional meetings.

#### **4. Updates on Continuous Distribution – Kidney and Pancreas Committee Efforts**

UNOS staff provided an update on the efforts of OPTN Committees in developing their continuous distribution frameworks, specifically the progress of the Kidney and Pancreas Committees. The OPTN Lung Transplantation Committee has a policy proposal out for the upcoming public comment cycle, while the OPTN Kidney Transplantation and OPTN Pancreas Transplantation Committees are co-sponsoring a concept paper.

#### Summary of discussion:

The Chair noted that the Committee's first continuous distribution paper discussed theoretical concerns but their next paper will discuss the tradeoffs that ought to occur and the balancing of attributes. With

this in mind, what ways can the Committee and its members provide valuable input in these developing projects? UNOS staff identified three primary ways that the Ethics Committee could weigh in on the development of continuous distribution:

1. Analyze the balance between equality and utility and which attributes belong in each category
2. Assist in developing a representative evidence gathering exercise, similar to the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) which was done for the OPTN Lung Transplantation Committee in 2020
3. Identify any specific errors that may exist when balancing the tradeoff between attributes

A member noted that the white paper, *Ethical Considerations of Continuous Distribution in Organ Allocation*, focused on the attributes of the recipient but attention needs to be paid to the quality of the organ and factored into the allocation of each organ. UNOS staff responded that this is the main issue that the Kidney and Pancreas Committees must address as they move forward with designing their continuous distribution framework. Currently, these Committees have a few different options for developing match runs which consider organ quality and they will be requesting feedback on the options during public comment. The member added that the solution would not just be to send lower quality kidneys to the areas that receive lower quantities of offers, but instead create the balance of quality and quantity. UNOS staff ensured that placement efficiency will be an important topic as the Kidney and Pancreas Committees proceed.

The Chair asked the speaker to elaborate on the medical urgency definition from the slides to allow for the Committee to have a better understanding of how it could apply to equity and utility. UNOS staff detailed that in alignment with previous publications from the Ethics Committee, waitlist mortality has been grouped with equity with the goal of wanting a candidate to receive a transplant while they are still healthy enough to do so. However, looking at the net reduction of lives lost while on the waiting list could fall under utility. Alternatively, from a utility point of view every day has the same quantifiable value, but from an equity perspective if an individual only has 30 days to live then losing one day has a greater value than someone with six months to live.

The Vice Chair asked how, and to what extent, should equity bear an influence on utility considerations? Ultimately, what is the check that equity should have on utility as the OPTN moves to a continuous distribution framework? UNOS staff responded that this question is two fold in nature, what are the things that should be awarded points and what are the things that need to be monitored? This was exemplified through the example of geography, which is a unit that is measurable, but there is still the tradeoff of points being awarded and its impact being monitored moving forward.

A member asked if there were ways for the Ethics Committee members to engage with their regions to consider these ethical view points and advance ethical conversations during public comment? UNOS staff encouraged members to share existing OPTN resources and sharing that information with staff to let us know if there are areas for improvement in external communication. Additionally, Committee members are encouraged to engage with their networks and promote ethical conversations and circulate their feedback with the Committee overall.

#### Next steps:

The Chair asked members to think about the three primary ways the Ethics Committee can provide feedback about the Kidney and Pancreas continuous distribution efforts and consider what data or information members may need to meaningfully contribute in these areas. UNOS staff encouraged members to reach out with any questions or requests for additional resources.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

- August 19, 2021
- September 16, 2021
- October 29, 2021 – In Person Meeting at the Chicago Hilton O’Hare
- November 18, 2021
- December 16, 2021
- January 20, 2022
- February 17, 2022
- March 17, 2022
- April 21, 2022
- May 19, 2022
- June 16, 2022

## Attendance

- **Committee Members**
  - Amy Friedman
  - Andrew Flescher
  - Carrie Thiessen
  - Catherine Vascik
  - Colleen Reed
  - David Bearl
  - Earnest Davis
  - Ehab Saad
  - George Bayliss
  - Glenn Cohen
  - Keren Ladin
  - Lynsey Biondi
  - Melissa Anderson
  - N. Thao Galvan
  - Roshan George
  - Sena Wilson-Sheehan
- **HRSA Representatives**
  - Jim Bowman
  - Marilyn Levi
- **SRTR Staff**
  - Bryn Thompson
  - Maryam Valapour
- **UNOS Staff**
  - Eric Messick
  - James Alcorn
  - Kristina Hogan
  - Laura Schmitt
  - Ross Walton
  - Susan Tlusty
- **Other Attendees**
  - Dave Weimer
  - Irene Kim