

**OPTN Donation after Circulatory Death Policy Review Workgroup  
Meeting Summary  
December 18, 2024  
Conference Call**

**Lori Markham, RN, MSN, CCRN, Chair**

## **Introduction**

The OPTN Donation after Circulatory Death (DCD) Policy Review Workgroup (the Workgroup) met via WebEx teleconference on 12/18/2024 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Project Purpose/Overview

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

### **1. Project Purpose/Overview**

#### Presentation Summary

The purpose of this project is to ensure that DCD policies are relevant and aligned with current practice. The project will also revise policy language to give Organ Procurement Organizations (OPO)s and donor hospitals more flexibility to discuss DCD donations with family members and evaluate the need for normothermic regional perfusion (NRP) along with other machine perfusion policies.

#### *Timing of DCD Discussion*

One issue the Workgroup will need to address is the timing of family discussions the OPO has with families about organ donations. Current policy states that "prior to the OPO initiating any discussion with the legal next-of-kin about organ donation for a potential DCD donor, the OPO must confirm that the legal next-of-kin has elected to withdraw life sustaining medical treatment." The issue with this policy is that DCD donation discussions often occur too late in the process leaving families with little time to consider all their options. According to some research this not only decreases the potential for donated organs but also denies families the potential to ease their bereavement process through organ donation.

There are many policies and opinions the Workgroup will need to consider as they seek to adjust the timing of family discussions on organ donation. The OPTN has a specific policy for the timing of these discussions, though the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) does not specify when such discussions with families should take place. The American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) has issued a statement saying that a decision to withdrawal life sustaining support must be made prior to and independent of any discussion about DCD. Similarly, the OPTN Ethics Committee expressed concerns about language changes to DCD policy in 2013. It will be important for the Workgroup to weigh and consider these factors as they propose changes to policy.

#### *NRP Policy*

As of September 2024, the Executive Committee has charged the Operations and Safety Committee with establishing requirements for standardized practice in the use of NRP. That guidance is expected to go

out for a special public comment to gain community feedback. That guidance will help inform the Workgroup how to incorporate NRP into DCD policy.

*Review of Current DCD Policies*

Current DCD policy touches on broad topics such as the following:

- Agreement
- Protocols
- Potential DCD donor Evaluation
- Consent for DCD
- Authorization for DCD
- Withdrawal of Life Sustaining Medical Treatment or Support
- Pronouncement of Death
- Organ Recovery
- DCD Potential Donor Who Converts to Brain Death after an Organ Offer Has Been Made

Summary of Discussion:

No decisions were made regarding this agenda item.
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There was no discussion for this agenda item.

Next steps:

The Workgroup members will review current DCD policy and bring potential modifications for DCD policy to the next meeting.

**Upcoming Meeting**

- January 22, 2025

## Attendance

- **Committee Members**
  - PJ Geraghty
  - Anja DiCesaro
  - Christine Maxmeister
  - Donna Smith
  - Jason Smith
  - Kim Baltierra
  - Micah Davis
  - Cassie Hertert
  - Stephen Gray
  
- **SRTR Staff**
  - Jonathan Miller
  
- **UNOS Staff**
  - Robert Hunter
  - Kaitlin Swanner
  - Ethan Studenic
  - Alina Martinez
  - Laura Schmitt