

OPTN Vascularized Composite Allograft Transplantation Committee

Meeting Summary

May 21, 2025

Conference Call

Vijay Gorantla, MD, PhD, Chair
Paige Porrett, MD, PhD, Vice Chair

Introduction

The OPTN Vascularized Composite Allograft (VCA) Transplantation Committee (the Committee) met via WebEx teleconference on 05/21/2025 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Listening Session

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

1. HRSA Listening Session

Dr. Ray Lynch, Organ Transplant Branch Chief, joined the Committee meeting to discuss the ongoing OPTN Modernization efforts.

Summary of Discussion:

No decisions were made regarding this agenda item.

The Committee Chair opened with introductory remarks and a brief overview of the agenda, which centered on the ongoing OPTN modernization efforts and the implications for the VCA community.

The HRSA representative began by providing an update on the status of the OPTN Board transition. A new slate of board nominees had just been released. This transition was designed to bring fresh perspectives to the OPTN Board. The representative emphasized that the modernization initiative is not only structural but also mission-driven, aiming to re-center the transplant system around patient needs, safety, and fairness.

The conversation then shifted to the role of VCA within this evolving landscape. Committee members raised concerns about the exclusion of VCA from key performance metrics used by CMS to evaluate OPOs. Despite being formally recognized as organs under the 2013 Final Rule, VCA grafts are not counted in the donation or transplantation rate metrics. This exclusion, members argued, creates a disincentive for OPOs to support VCA procurement, particularly given the resource-intensive nature of these procedures and the lack of reimbursement from Medicare, Medicaid, or most private insurers.

The committee stressed that this policy misalignment undermines both the visibility and viability of VCA programs. Members noted that donor families who consent to VCA donation deserve recognition, and that excluding these gifts from national metrics fails to honor their contributions. The HRSA representative acknowledged the concern and committed to raising the issue with CMS, noting that performance metrics should reflect the full scope of the transplant mission.

Further discussion explored the importance of patient and family engagement in policy development. Suggestions included the use of structured focus groups and surveys to capture a broader range of

perspectives. The HRSA representative agreed that expanding the base of patient input is essential and emphasized the need to avoid overburdening a small group of advocates.

The committee also discussed ongoing efforts to standardize protocols across VCA programs, particularly in hand and face transplantation. This work, aligned with recommendations from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, aims to consolidate existing protocols into a unified framework that reflects consensus across the field. The goal is to support future policy development and reimbursement by demonstrating a standardized, evidence-based approach to VCA care.

Toward the end of the meeting, members reviewed the newly released OPTN Board slate and expressed concern over the lack of VCA representation. The committee agreed that continued engagement with HRSA and the incoming Board will be critical to ensuring that VCA perspectives are included in future decision-making.

Members expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage directly with HRSA and reiterated their commitment to advancing the role of VCA within the national transplant system.

Next steps:

There are no next steps for this agenda item.

Upcoming Meeting

- June 18, 2025

Attendance

- **Committee Members**
 - Vijay Gorantla
 - Paige Porrett
 - Elliott Richards
 - Charlie Thomas
 - Sheila May Advento
 - Ericka Harrison
 - Todd Levy
 - Gerald Winder
 - Sandra Amaral
 - Eric Genden
 - Christina Kaufman
- **SRTR Staff**
 - Avery Cook
- **HRSA Staff:**
 - Ray Lynch
- **UNOS Staff**
 - Ethan Studenic
 - Matt Cafarella
 - Erin Schnellinger
 - Susan Tlusty
- **Other Attendees:**
 - Kersten Smith