

## **OPTN Ad Hoc International Relations Committee**

### **Meeting Summary**

**April 22, 2025**

**Conference Call**

**Peter Stock, MD, Chair**

**Cynthia Forland, Ph.D., Vice Chair**

### **Introduction**

The OPTN Ad Hoc International Relations Committee (the Committee) met via WebEx on 04/22/2025 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Public Comment Feedback: Barriers Related to the Evaluation and Follow-up of International Living Donors
2. Discussion & Vote: Barriers Related to the Evaluation and Follow-up of International Living Donors
3. Data Request Results: Citizenship Status of Donors Recovered in the U.S

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

### **1. Public Comment Feedback: Barriers Related to the Evaluation and Follow-up of International Living Donors**

The Committee reviewed the public comment feedback for the project, *Barriers Related to the Evaluation and Follow-up of International Living Donors*, which was released for public comment during the Winter 2025 public comment cycle.

Public comment feedback requested included:

- Are there additional challenges that should be considered when evaluating international living donors?
- Are there additional strategies/ practices that can be shared to address these barriers?

### Data summary:

Public comment overview:

- Most responses were from regional meetings, OPTN Committees, and stakeholder organizations.
- Top themes represented from public comment feedback:
  - Overall support for the guidance document
  - Recommendation for additional guidance
  - Consider additional strategies and practices

### Summary of discussion:

This is not an agenda item that required a decision.

During the public comment overview, staff noted that although feedback suggested providing additional guidance on the barriers outlined in the guidance document, there is limited literature and

information available on the evaluation and follow up of this specific population—non-citizen/residents (NCR) and non-citizen/non-residents (NCNR), which makes it challenging to offer further guidance or best practices to address these barriers.

## **2. Discussion & Vote: Barriers Related to the Evaluation and Follow-up of International Living Donors**

The Committee reviewed the public comment feedback and discussed whether any revisions to the guidance document were necessary, and voted on the document.

The Committee was asked:

- *Are there any revisions that should be considered to the current guidance document?*
- *what future revisions or supplements should be considered as new information and resources become available?*
- *Does the Committee support sending the guidance document to the OPTN Board of Directors in June 2025 for approval?*

### Summary of discussion:

Decision #1: The Committee agreed not to make any revisions to expand the guidance at this time, citing limited available resources and literature. However, the Committee will consider incorporating additional guidance in the future as more information becomes available.

Decision #2: The Committee decided not to include additional strategies or practices, noting that the recommended approaches are already addressed and build upon the existing content in the guidance document.

Decision #3: The Committee supported the guidance document presented to the OPTN Board of Directors in June 2025 as currently written, with no further revisions.

The Vice-Chair highlighted the value of the guidance document for transplant programs seeking support in evaluating and following up with international living donors. She acknowledged the limited availability of resources to address the identified barriers and raised questions about the possibility of updating the guidance in the future, particularly as new resources become available, such as those related to obtaining visas for donors, without undergoing the full public comment development process. She reiterated that while public comment feedback emphasized the need for additional guidance, the current scarcity of literature and data on this topic presents a challenge. She inquired about the process for incorporating future updates or additions to the guidance document as new information emerges.

Staff replied that the vote would indicate whether there's support for sending the document to the OPTN Board of Directors (BOD) for approval. If additional educational resources become available in the future to further address these barriers, then that would be considered a separate project from the current project slated to be presented to the BOD in June. He further explained that if there are minor changes to the guidance document are needed, such as adding a footnote to an updated regulation or revising a few sentences to align with new visa policy, etc., those changes could potentially be considered by the BOD, depending on the scope and nature of the change.

The Committee agreed that as information and resources become available, it would be beneficial to update the guidance document accordingly.

Another member noted that the guidance document already addresses relevant practices and strategies for the identified barriers. He explained that incorporating additional practices, such as those related to obtaining visas, would be difficult due to the variability of factors involved, including differences in

countries and political situations, etc. He emphasized that such processes are beyond the Committee's control and may not be a standardized process, making it difficult to include in a guidance document. He concluded by expressing support for the current version of the document and endorsed moving it forward to the BOD without further revisions.

The Committee concluded that no revisions to the guidance document were necessary, as no additional barriers were identified for inclusion. The Committee also considered public comment feedback that suggested incorporating more detailed strategies and practices to address the identified barriers. However, members felt that the recommended strategies were already reflected in the current document and built upon the existing guidance. Given the limited resources and information available on this topic, the Committee determined that there was no additional guidance to include at this time. They agreed to revisit the document in the future as more information and resources become available.

*Vote: Does the International Relations Committee support sending the guidance document to the OPTN Board of Directors in June 2025 for approval?*

*Support: 7 Abstain: 0 Oppose: 0*

Next steps:

The Committee's project, Barriers Related to the Evaluation and Follow-up of International Living Donors, will be presented to the OPTN Board of Directors in June 2025 for approval.

### **3. Data Request Results: Citizenship Status of Donors Recovered in the U.S**

The Committee was presented with data results regarding the citizenship status of donors recovered in the U.S. This data request is a follow-up of the 2023 annual report on non-U.S. residents' transplant activity that was presented during the [2/25/2025](#) committee meeting. While the report primarily focuses on transplant activity of recipients, the Committee expressed interest in additional data regarding the status of living and deceased donors, as the Committee's most recent project focused on the living donor population; therefore, additional information specifically about donors was of interest. The data request addressed the following:

- Distribution of donor citizenship status by donor type (living vs deceased), annually for the past 5 years.
- Number and percentage of transplants by donor citizenship status, donor type (living vs deceased), organ, and recipient age (pediatric vs adult).

Data summary:

Deceased Donors

- Majority (90%) of deceased donors each year were U.S citizens.
- 2% of deceased donors each year were NCR and less than 1% were NCNR.
- 6-9% of deceased donors each year had 'unknown' citizenship status.

Living Donors

- Majority (95%) of living donors each year were U.S citizens.
- 3% of living donors each year were NCR and 2% were NCNR.

Summary of discussion:

This was not an agenda item that required a decision.
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A member noted that the disparity between the population of U.S donors.

The Vice-Chair highlighted that there are more donors in noncitizen status than there are recipients.

**Upcoming Meeting**

- June 24, 2025

## **Attendance**

- **Committee Members**
  - Cynthia Forland
  - Manida Wungjiranirun
  - Donene Vukovich
  - Abby Ruiz
  - Taryn Shappell
  - Angele Lacks
- **HRSA Representatives**
- **SRTR Staff**
- **UNOS Staff**
  - Tamika Watkins
  - Cole Fox
  - Ross Walton
  - Sarah Booker
  - Matt Cafarella
- **Other Attendees**
  - George Bayliss
  - Nahel Elias