

To: Liver transplant program directors
Liver transplant program administrators
OPO executive directors

From: Julie Heimbach, M.D.
Chair, OPTN/UNOS Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee

Subject: Liver Committee update, July 2018

We want to continue to update you on the status of major projects involving the OPTN/UNOS Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee.

Liver distribution policy development

You are likely aware that based on the OPTN/UNOS Board's recent adoption of principles for geographic organ distribution and correspondence with HRSA about liver distribution policy, the OPTN/UNOS Executive Committee has asked our committee to reconsider liver distribution policy. More specifically, we've been asked to develop a policy that replaces the donor service area (DSA) and region as distribution units, and to propose recommendations for Board action at its December 2018 meeting.

Our committee has taken this charge seriously. We are meeting every week by conference call to discuss options and determine what modeling can help the transplant community make a fully informed decision, recognizing the challenges posed by the need for an aggressive timeline.

We are considering two alternative distribution concepts, each based on a fixed distance from the donor hospital to the transplant hospital (concentric circles). This is a familiar concept in transplantation, already used in thoracic organ distribution, and our committee has previously studied and modeled several circle-based approaches. For either of the concepts we are considering, the most medically urgent candidates would have the broadest initial access (500 to 600 nautical miles), followed by more local access for less urgent candidates.

We have asked the SRTR to model each of the two concepts, comparing different alternatives for circle size and MELD thresholds. We will carefully weigh modeling results and additional data to shape our development of a proposal. We also will share the data and modeling results broadly as soon as they are available, so you can see what we considered and what the simulation results suggest for each alternative. We will publish the resulting proposal in a special public comment period, likely beginning in early October.

You may also have heard that a federal lawsuit has been filed, asking HRSA and UNOS to institute a revised liver distribution policy within a six-month time frame. The filing does not ask the court to impose a temporary restraining order, which would compel action within that time. While we understand our current policy development process is on a demanding timetable, we believe we can develop a proposal by the end of this year that meets the principles of geographic distribution approved

by the OPTN/UNOS Board in June and that addresses the fundamental concerns expressed in the lawsuit.

For questions or further information

If you'd like to know more about existing policies or public comment items, please visit our committee's [page](#) on the OPTN website and/or contact your Regional Administrator. If you'd like to know more about projects or proposals our committee continues to discuss, contact your regional representative to the committee or send an e-mail to liver@unos.org.