

OPTN Ad Hoc International Relations Committee

Meeting Summary

January 21, 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 teleconference on 01/21/2025 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Presentation: 2023 Report on non-U.S Resident Transplant Activity
2. Brainstorm: New Project Ideas

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

1. Presentation: 2023 Report on Non-U.S Residents Transplant Activity.

The Committee received a presentation on the 2023 report detailing the transplant activities of non-U.S residents. This annual report, mandated by OPTN Policy 17.1.C: *Report of Activities Related to the Transplantation of Non-U.S Citizens/Non-U.S Residents*, focuses on the registration and transplantation of individuals who are not U.S citizens or residents. The report presents data on the citizenship and residency status of transplant candidates and recipients in 2023.

Data summary:

Registrations

- 1.7% (N= 1,200) of waitlist additions in 2023 were for non-citizens/non-residents (NCNR)
 - Including 273 for NCNR in the U.S specifically for transplantation
 - Increase from 1.5% in 2022
- Region 9 had the highest percentage of NCNR waitlist additions (3.6%)
- 45.8 of transplant hospitals had 0 waitlist additions in 2023; 25.3% added 4 NCNR registrations

Transplants

- 1.7% (N=684) of deceased donor transplant in 2023 were for NCNR
 - Including N=166 for NCNR in the U.S specifically for transplantation
 - Increase from 1.5% in 2022
- Region 5 had the highest percentage of NCNR deceased donor transplant (3.4%)
- 1.2% of living donor kidney transplant and 2.0% of living donor liver transplants in 2023 were for NCNR

Summary of discussion:

This agenda item did not require any decisions.

Main points of discussion:

- While the focus of the report is on NCNR, it would be beneficial to have more data on NCR.

- There could be discrepancies on how programs are interpreting and classifying NCNR and NCR.

A member asked if there was any information about living donor transplants. The presenter replied that the report does not include the citizenship status of living donors. The Chair noted the importance of having data on the number of non-citizens/non-residents (NCNR) deceased donors. He also inquired about data on non-citizen/U.S residents (NCR). The Chair expressed concerns that the presentation focuses on NCNR and only included limited data on NCR. Specifically, the data on the waitlist additions showed that NCR adults made up a majority (6.3%) compared to NCNR (1.6%) in 2023. The presenter replied that there is limited data on NCR included in the presentation, and the rest of the presentation focuses on NCNR. She explained that the focus of the report is based on the OPTN Policy, which charges

This agenda item did not require any decisions.

Main points of discussion:

- NCR and NCNR are not clearly defined and may led to misinterpretation.
- Depending on an individual's permanent place of residence may impact their citizenship status.

the Committee to review NCNR data.

The Chair noted that in the results of a feedback form conducted by the committee and independent of this report, 50% of respondents noted that they classify transplant donor candidates who are not US citizens that reside in the U.S without any legal protections as NCNR. Based on the data provided in the 2023 report and the results from the feedback form, there may be concerns that programs are misinterpreting NCR and NCNR, which could impact how information gets reported to the OPTN. The Committee is particularly interested in NCR data due to the nature of the work they've been working on, including their recent project, *Barriers Related to the Evaluation and Follow-up of International Living Donors*.

Finally, a member commented that there may be concerns with classifying individuals by legal residency rather than geographic residency.

Next steps:

The Committee will follow up with any additional questions or comments they have about the 2023 Report on non-U.S Resident Transplant Activity.

2. Brainstorm: New Project Ideas

The Committee discussed new project ideas.

Summary of discussion:

The Chair suggested getting a better understanding of the classification system and how to clarify how donors are being classified. A member inquired if the transplant candidate registration (TCR) form specifies legal status, and the Chair responded no. A member asked about the definition of a non-citizen/U.S resident (NCR). Staff replied the NCR is defined as a non-citizen of the United States for whom the U.S is the primary place of residence. The Chair expressed concerns that citizenship status for international candidates and donors is not well defined and may be misinterpreted, explaining that a

NCR could be someone residing in the U.S on a work permit, visa, or as student, or anyone who is residing in the U.S with legal documentation. A non-citizen/ non-resident (NCNR) is a non-citizen of the United States for whom the United States is not the primary place of residence.

Another member asked if the TCR form asks about the primary place for residency, and staff replied that it asks for the country of permanent residency. The Vice- Chair commented that primary place of residence does not have the same legal implications as permanent residency. The Vice-Chair recapped two major concerns: the lack of data on donor citizenship status and the definitions of NCR and NCNR are unclear.

A member suggested analyzing data on the place of residency for NCRs and NCNRs to get an idea of what their place of residency is and the percentage of these populations that do not reside in the U.S as their permanent place of residence. He also suggested looking into a better definition of NCR and NCNR. The Vice-Chair also suggested reviewing any available data on NCRs and NCNRs as it relates to recipients, that would give us any information about where they live. The presenter replied that the full report includes data on the breakdown of country of residents for NCNR adults and pediatrics, which may be a helpful starting point.

Next steps:

The Committee will continue to brainstorm new project ideas.

Upcoming Meeting

- February 25, 2025

Attendance

- **Committee Members**
 - Abby Ruiz
 - Cynthia Forland
 - Peter Stock
 - Steve Wisel
 - Donene Vukovich
 - Angele Lacks
 - Manida Wungjiranirun
- **HRSA Representatives**
 - Marilyn Levi
- **SRTR Staff**
- **UNOS Staff**
 - Tamika Watkins
 - Sarah Booker
 - Laura Schmitt
- **Other Attendees**
 - Nahel Elias