OPTN ORGAN PROCUREMENT AND TRANSPLANTATION NETWORK

OPTN Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee
Meeting Summary
October 6, 2023
Conference Call

Scott Biggins, MD, Chair
Shimul Shah, MD, MHCM, Vice Chair

Introduction

The OPTN Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee (the Committee) met via Webex teleconference on 10/06/2023 to discuss the following agenda items:

1. Continuous Distribution: Geographic Equity Attribute

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

1. Continuous Distribution: Geographic Equity Attribute

The Committee discussed how geographic equity should be incorporated into continuous distribution of livers.

Summary of discussion:

> Decision: The Committee has decided to use population density as the input to the geographic equity attribute in liver continuous distribution pending review of data.

The Committee reviewed their previous discussions on possible inputs into the geographic equity attribute – supply and demand, population density, and fixed distance.

A member commented that eliminating one of the three options would be helpful, and they felt that fixed distance is similar to how the current allocation system is structured. They also noted that population density is not perfect, due to the varying performance of organ procurement organizations (OPOs), however, they felt this is the best option out of the three presented. A member voiced their support for using population density as an attribute in continuous distribution. They questioned if it would be valuable to submit a data request on how a supply/demand input would work. A member pointed out the significance of considering the unintended consequences of any model, which is why population density may be the best fit since it cannot be manipulated. The Chair recommended that the Committee ask the OPO representatives on the Committee to comment on their confidence in utilizing eligible deaths across the country as an allocation input in future meetings. A member commented that population density is much simpler, and having a data analysis on it may be beneficial to indicate intense population deficits across the country. They mentioned that having data to analyze the impact on high population-density transplant programs may help determine whether there are any significant disadvantages.

The Chair of the OPTN Pediatric Transplantation Committee commented that using population density is reasonable and mentioned that it would be helpful to see data on how that impacts pediatric candidates.

A member, whose transplant program is located on the coast, voiced their struggle in conceptualizing this attribute, especially since they felt that the Committee is not considering the patient perspective. They noted that access to end-stage liver disease (ESLD) care in low-population density states is different from those who live in a more densely populated area, thus they struggle with using population density and would prefer to use supply/demand. They continued, saying that seeing both population density and supply/demand in modeling would help make a final recommendation. They noted that for a transplant program that does not list low model for end-stage liver disease (MELD) candidates but continues to follow them, the demand in the area is not accurately represented. A member, who is a liver transplant recipient, commented that candidates can articulate population density in a clearer manner than supply/demand.

The Vice Chair agreed that eliminating fixed distances would be beneficial and that reviewing data would help aid the Committee's decision. The Vice Chair noted that there are inequities since not everyone who needs a transplant has access to a transplant program. With this, the Vice Chair believes the supply/demand model will be very difficult to prove and support, due to inequities.

A member noted that although there may be a disadvantage to using population density, there are even more disadvantages to using supply/demand. The member stated that using population density is the most intuitive and fair. The Chair pointed out that this attribute likely will not be a large portion of a composite allocation score (CAS). They reminded the Committee that population density could be incorporated into the first version of continuous distribution, and there are opportunities to update the input in future versions of continuous distribution.

A member said that population density is the most versatile input. The Chair of the OPTN Pediatric Transplantation Committee agreed that increasing opacity by utilizing a supply/demand-based attribute in a continuous distribution system adds complexity to the priority ranking, which is not ideal. The Vice Chair observed that the supply/demand input will be challenging for the liver transplant community to comprehend because transplant programs that have the highest demand may not necessarily be the busiest transplant programs.

A member noted that the Committee should be trying to improve organ allocation for candidates, not improve socioeconomic outcomes. A member pointed out that for the supply side, it would be useful to know potential eligible donors and the historical utilization rates of those donors.

The Committee will look at population density from census data and compare it to various supply and demand metrics.

Next steps:

The Committee had consensus to move forward with the input to the geographic equity attribute to be population density. Contractor staff will prepare a data request for the population density attribute, which the Committee will review at the next meeting.

Upcoming Meetings

- October 16, 2023 (Detroit, MI)
- November 3, 2023 @ 2:00 PM ET (teleconference)
- November 17, 2023 @ 2:00 PM ET (teleconference)

Attendance

- **Committee Members**
  - Aaron Ahearn
  - Allison Kwong
  - Cal Matsumoto
  - Chris Sonnenday
  - Colleen Reed
  - Erin Maynard
  - James Pomposelli
  - Joseph DiNorcia
  - Kym Watt
  - Lloyd Brown
  - Scott Biggins
  - Shimul Shah
  - Vanessa Cowan
  - Vanessa Pucciarelli
- **HRSA Representatives**
  - Marilyn Levi
- **SRTR Staff**
  - Jack Lake
  - Katie Audette
  - Tim Weaver
- **UNOS Staff**
  - Betsy Gans
  - Erin Schnellinger
  - James Alcorn
  - Joel Newman
  - Meghan McDermott
  - Niyati Upadhyay
  - Susan Tlusty
- **Other**
  - David Weimer
  - Emily Perito
  - S. DeLair
  - Samantha Taylor
  - Ted Papalexopoulos
  - Tomoaki Kato