

Making It Happen

UNOS liaisons provide key support to committees

Editor's note: In the Nov.–Dec. 2009 Update, the article, “Something for Everyone” (p. 24) describes UNOS’ department of professional services and its multitude of resources for transplant professionals as well as transplant candidates, recipients and their families.

In that article, space didn’t allow additionally describing the department’s important work with OPTN/UNOS committees, and a follow-up article was promised. Since this section is called “Introducing Ourselves,” we decided to take an annotated directory approach.

A lion’s share of developing allocation policy is done by OPTN/UNOS committees. The 22 committees, comprised of about 350 members, review proposed policies and provide assessments to the OPTN/UNOS board of directors, taking into account historical, legal and operational considerations, as well as public comment. With that important work done by committees, the board can focus its time and resources on refining policy to improve its effectiveness.

Each committee has a specific charge that describes the scope of its work, which, as can easily be discerned from the description above, can be quite complex. Accuracy and thoroughness are critical.

For those reasons, each committee is assigned a UNOS staff member to act as the committee’s liaison. Committee liaisons are key in making sure the committee’s activities run smoothly and efficiently.

In addition to the necessary administrative tasks (e.g., scheduling meetings, drafting agendas, preparing handouts and the like), the liaisons also

- conduct background research on issues
- guide committees in developing policies based on the best available evidence
- work with the SRTR liaison and UNOS research staff to ensure adherence to analytic criteria in statistical analyses,
- consult with UNOS IT staff and develop an automated solution for policies within UNOS’ computer and information systems and
- guide committees in adhering to HRSA’s policy development process and UNOS’ processes for policy development and subsequent implementation.

Staff in UNOS’ department of professional services act as liaisons for seven of the 22 OPTN/UNOS committees. The following annotated directory provides a brief description of the specific charge of those committees as well as the names and contact information for the liaisons assigned to them. [U](#)



AD HOC DISEASE TRANSMISSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (DTAC)

Shandie H. Covington

E-mail: covingsh@unos.org

Considers issues related to the transmission of disease through organ transplantation. OPTN/UNOS policy requires members to report any potential disease transmission cases so that centers can treat their recipients appropriately. The committee also reviews aggregate data on all reported cases with the dual goals of educating and guiding the transplant community toward preventing disease transmission, and of helping develop policy to reduce donor-derived transmission events. In addition, a DTAC subcommittee is studying data on malignancies in an effort to prevent unnecessary discard of organs that carry little or no risk of malignancy transmission.



LIVING DONOR COMMITTEE

Lee Bolton, M.S., ACNP

E-mail: boltondl@unos.org

Creates policy and resources to help members navigate the relatively new territory of living donation, for which UNOS was given increased responsibility in 2006. The committee has developed three booklets on living donation, which are available free of charge on the UNOS website. The committee also has been instrumental in creating a separate policy section for living donation, culling policy specific to living donation from deceased donor policy.



OPERATIONS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Kimberly H. Taylor, RN

E-mail: taylorki@unos.org

Reviews patient safety situations reported by OPTN/UNOS members through UNetSM. When conducting their review, committee members adopt an overall systems point of view in order to understand where the process broke down with a view toward improvement and prevention. Committee members also review best practices, which may be forwarded to the appropriate committee(s) and ultimately can lead to policy improvements.



ORGAN AVAILABILITY COMMITTEE

Kim Johnson, M.S.

E-mail: kim.johnson@unos.org

Works toward increasing the number of organs available for transplantation. Members study and develop evidence for practices that promote the recovery and transplantation of more organs from each donor and more organs with good

function. The committee makes its findings available to other committees and to professional and public audiences to help foster awareness and ultimately change behaviors. Recently, members have been investigating renal machine perfusion and high risk for discard kidneys.



OPO COMMITTEE

Franki L. Chabalewski, RN, M.S.

E-mail: chabalfl@unos.org

Focuses on issues that directly affect OPOs, organ donation and procurement. The committee has recently drafted OPO “performance metrics” for process-improvement efforts. Members also have identified specific issues that make

packaging and labeling organs cumbersome, and earlier this year began pilot-testing a new color-coded labeling system. Currently, the committee is working with organ-specific committees to enhance communication between centers and OPOs when donor information changes after an offer is made. The committee also has coordinated efforts to define and collect data on eligible and imminent deaths and continues to refine the issues affecting the data collection.



PATIENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (PAC)

Freda M. Wilkins

E-mail: wilkinfm@unos.org

Unlike the other OPTN/UNOS committees, 70 percent of the patient affairs committee (PAC) is composed of transplant patients. The committee gives recipients and donors a legitimate voice in the policy-making process and in the development

of educational resources. A major emphasis for PAC right now is increased emphasis on plain language throughout policy and resource materials. Historically, transplant patient education materials have focused on preparing patients and families for transplant, but have provided very little in the way of education on living with a transplant. PAC has identified this gap and now hopes to focus on the development of posttransplant educational materials for both donors and recipients. PAC will utilize the collective knowledge of long-time surviving recipients from the committee to attempt to fill this gap.



TRANSPLANT ADMINISTRATORS COMMITTEE (TAC)

Angel C. Carroll, M.S.W.

E-mail: carrolac@unos.org

Focuses on transplant-program administration issues and provides input to other OPTN/UNOS committees and the board of directors on the potential impact of policies and other OPTN

requirements on program operation. Members also plan the UNOS Transplant Management Forum, an annual educational event for professional administrators. The TAC has developed two resources for transplant administrators—a staffing survey that can help administrators determine the optimal staffing level for their center and also an RFI [request for information] that allows centers to submit essential transplant program data to insurance and managed care companies.



TRANSPLANT COORDINATORS

Kim Johnson, M.S.

E-mail: kim.johnson@unos.org

Works toward improving the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of organ procurement and transplant coordination through policy and education initiatives. Members currently are identifying common practices in inactive wait-list

management. They are also engaged in various educational projects for both procurement and clinical coordinators.

An upcoming *Update* article will provide a similar snapshot of other OPTN/UNOS committees and the staff in other UNOS departments that act as committee liaisons.