



# UNOS Launches Distance-based Education Program

First webinar focused on HIPAA regulations

**O**n Oct. 5, UNOS launched a new training program, bringing education to OPTN/UNOS members where they work, helping them avoid the expense of travel.

The first program, a live panel discussion moderated by OPTN/UNOS immediate past president Charles Alexander, RN, M.S.N., M.B.A., looked at sharing of donor and recipient information and the impact of HIPAA [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act] regulations.

The transplant community has struggled since 1996—when the federal law was passed—with interpretation of HIPAA regulations and their effect on sharing information between donor and recipient. It is well documented that donor families benefit from receiving some information or communication from the recipient of their loved one's gift.

Too often, however, HIPAA regulations are misinterpreted and, out of fear of violating the regulations, transplant center staff may decide to release little or no information. The panel discussion helped dispel the myths associated with sharing information and provided examples of successful, and legitimate, information-sharing opportunities.

Specific issues discussed included HIPAA restrictions and its exceptions on sharing donor and recipient information; differences between deceased donor vs. living donor information that can be released to transplant recipients; implementing a change in policy that will enhance the sharing of information between recipients and donor families; and much more.

In addition to moderator Alexander, panel members were Lori Brigham, M.B.A., CEO, Washington Regional Transplant Community, and chair, OPTN/UNOS OPO committee; Alexandra K. Glazier, J.D., M.P.H., vice president and general counsel, New England Organ Bank, and chair, OPTN/UNOS ethics committee; and Edward W. Garrity Jr., M.D., M.B.A., professor of medicine and vice chair of clinical operations, University of Chicago, and former chair, OPTN/UNOS policy oversight committee.

More than 2,500 donation and transplant professionals registered for the program. Unfortunately, though, a number of them had trouble connecting, many due to agency security restrictions. Since it was UNOS' maiden voyage into the world of webinars, some e-glitches were to be expected and, lessons learned, UNOS has plans under way for a trouble-free next program.

Transplant certification credits (CEPTCs) were awarded for participation. A three-month follow-up assessment will help to determine if changes in practice were made after the webinar.

Mark your calendar: The next live webcast is scheduled for Jan. 11, and the topic will be the packaging and labeling of organs for transport, with special focus on the new labels for the transport of living donor organs. **U**

**ONLINE** If you missed UNOS' first webinar, you can access it by visiting UNOS' communication archive, <http://communication.unos.org/resources/training>.