

Ethical Considerations Surrounding Survival Benefit-Based Liver Allocation

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Abstract Body:

The disparity between the demand for and supply of donor livers has continued to grow over the last two decades, placing greater weight on the need for efficient and effective allocation. Although the use of extended criteria donors (ECD) has shown greater potential, it remains unregulated. Schaubel et al. have recently proposed a survival benefit model which balances waitlist survival and potential transplantation benefit for a given quality of donor liver. The OPTN/UNOS Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee considered this and other models in a recent report, concluding that the current allocation method does not require modification.

In order to further evaluate the survival benefit model, the various ethical concerns shaping organ allocation were discussed and used to identify strengths and shortcomings associated with the proposed model. Compared to the current MELD/PELD system, the survival benefit model incorporates a greater number of ethical principles, uses a sophisticated statistical model to increase efficiency and reduce waste, minimizes bias, and parallels developments in the allocation of other organs. Conversely, the model fails to address quality of life concerns, prioritization for younger patients, its less promising posttransplant prediction accuracy, and potential issues regarding informed consent and economic burdens. To remedy these issues, we suggested incorporating various improvements based on recent literature. Although limitations exist, the survival benefit model now exists as a better means of improving allocation. We support the model proposed by Schaubel et al., with the amendments we suggested, and urge the OPTN/UNOS Liver and Intestinal Organ Transplantation Committee and the transplant community to strongly consider this model as another step toward better liver allocation.

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