



March 2, 2011

Donald M. Berwick, MD, MMP
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
200 Independence Avenue
Washington, DC 20201

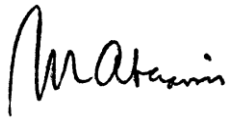
Dear Dr. Berwick:

On behalf of the American Society of Transplant Surgeons (ASTS), the American Society of Transplantation (AST) the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations (AOPO), and the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), we are writing to request a meeting with you to follow up on discussions that we held with Dr. Barry Straube, shortly before his departure from CMS.

Dr. Straube suggested that we follow up directly with you regarding two important issues related to Medicare payment for transplant-related services. First, Medicare currently requires that OPOs charge transplant centers the same amount for pancreata procured for islet transplant research and pancreata for whole organ (pancreas) transplants. This policy has made islet transplant research financially prohibitive and has resulted in a dramatic decline in the number of transplant centers engaging in this promising research, which is entirely inconsistent with Congressional intent. Second, inconsistencies between CMS' OPO and transplant center outcomes requirements is exacerbating organ wastage and increasing Medicare costs by encouraging OPOs to retrieve all organs-- regardless of quality--while discouraging transplant centers from transplanting suboptimal organs. Brief descriptions of each of these issues and our proposed solutions are attached.

We would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss a pathway forward to resolve both of these pressing problems. Katrina Crist will be contacting you in the near future to identify a mutually agreeable meeting time, and, in the interim, please do not hesitate to contact any of us if you have any questions about either of these important issues.

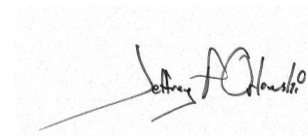
Sincerely yours,



Michael M. Abecassis, MD, MBA
ASTS President
ASTS National Office
2461 S. Clark Street, Suite 640
Arlington, VA 22202
PH: 703-414-7870
Email: mabecass@nmh.org
Email: katrina.crist@asts.org



Maryl R. Johnson, MD
AST President
AST National Office
15000 Commerce Parkway, Suite C
Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054
PH: 856-439-9986
Email: mrj@medicine.wisc.edu
Email: snelson@ahint.com



Jeffrey P. Orlowski, MS
AOPO President
AOPO National Office
8500 Leesburg Pike, Suite 300
Vienna, VA 22182
PH: 703-556-4242
Email: jorlowski@cdtny.org
Email: eeidbo@aopo.org



Charles E. Alexander, RN, MSN, MBA, CPTC
UNOS President
UNOS Headquarters
700 North 4th Street
Richmond, VA 23219
PH: 443-833-1026
Email: calexander@thelf.org
Email: sheparbm@unos.org

Enc: Issue Summary – Cost Reporting Policies for Islets
Issue Summary – Transplant Center and OPO Regulations

Cc: Marilyn Tavenner, RN, CMS Principal Deputy Administrator
Barry Straube, MD, Former CMS Chief Medical Officer & Director of OCSQ