

# Transplant Recipient Selection: Improving the decision making process

Quincy-Robyn Young, PhD &  
Rodney Plante, CSW



# We make tough decisions

- We deal with a limited resource
- Decisions are not typically cut-and-dried
- Dealing with psychosocial contraindications are often the most ethically and emotionally challenging
- Under these potentially charged circumstances, group dynamics can play an especially powerful role

# Review of group dynamics

- Polarization
- Group Think
- Power dynamics

# Polarization

- Post-discussion decision will be more extreme (in either direction)
  - Responsibility is spread
  - More information available
  - Persuasive arguments
  - Social comparison
  - Charismatic leader can intensify

# Polarization

- This dynamic has been found to be operating in a study of hypothetical decisions made by health care professional when making decisions about allocation of scarce medical resources.

# Polarization Prevention

- Knowledge / Awareness of dynamic

# Group Think

- A tendency of a group to strive for unanimity. This interferes with critical thinking.
  - Decreased motivation to think critically or realistically appraise alt courses of action
  - Decreased mental efficiency, reality testing and moral judgment
  - Sometimes systematic avoidance of questions or subjects that could lead to dispute

# Group think: Prevention

- Awareness of dynamic
- Guard against premature agreement
- Promote open discussion and inquiry
- Elicit dissenting opinions

# Power Dynamics

- In a group, some members' voices are heard more, other discounted
  - can be due to hierarchy
  - or persuasiveness/popularity

# Power Dynamics: Prevention

- Awareness
- Elicit minority opinion

# Other factors that affect group decision making

- Stress
- Personal beliefs/biases/values

# Stress

- Groups function less effectively under stress
- Stress leads to:
  - Narrowing of team perspective
  - Members' shift focus from group goals to more narrow or individual perspective
  - Significantly worse performance by groups under stress

# Stress: Prevention

- Simplify the task where possible
- Interventions that attempt to enhance team perspective and team building may also help.

# Is information shared efficiently in group discussion?

- There is evidence that it is not
  - Shared information is more likely to be shared in group discussions than individually held information
- Being aware of phenomenon is important
- Good leadership and use of whiteboard also helpful

# What we have done

1. Regular retreats – updating protocols, team building etc
2. Use “Candidate Selection Form” for every listing decision
3. Try to have fun

**Heart Transplant Program  
CANDIDATE SELECTION FORM**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Diagnosis: \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Medical/Surgical Contraindications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> NONE</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Neurological</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cardiovascular</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Respiratory</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> GI/Hepatic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Renal</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Urogenital</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Skin/Eyes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Musculoskeletal</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Hematologic</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Endocrine</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> OTHER</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lifestyle Management Contraindications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> NONE</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Smoking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Substance misuse</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exercise</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medications</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diet</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Weight</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fluid restriction</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Missed appointments</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> OTHER</li> </ul>
<p><b>Psychosocial Contraindications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> NONE</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Psychiatric disorder</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Personality disorder</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive deficits</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor coping</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social support system limitations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Relocation concerns</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Financial concerns</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> OTHER</li> </ul>	<p><b>Decision Making Process</b></p> <p>THIS DECISION WAS MADE WITH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Open and honest discussion amongst the team</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> An invitation for dissenting opinions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Input from all appropriate team members</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A holistic assessment of the patient</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Input from patient re personal preferences</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Respect for patient's dignity and autonomy</li> </ul> <p>COMMENTS:</p>

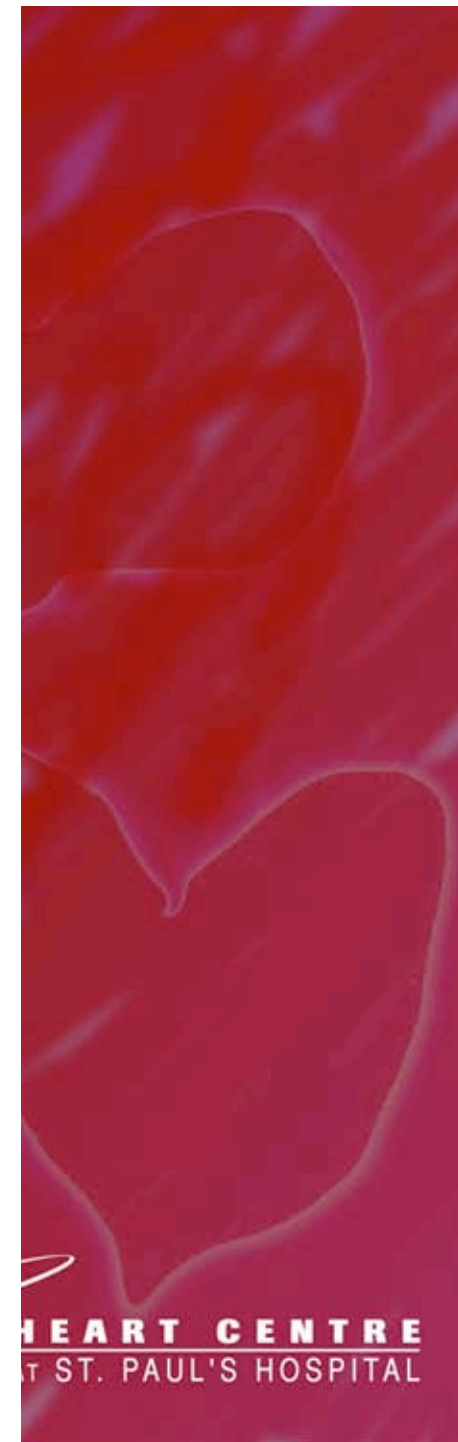
**Transplant Team Decision:** Transplant Candidate  YES  NO    V.A.D. Candidate  YES  NO     Deferred

**Decision Approved By:** Cardiologist: \_\_\_\_\_ Surgeon: \_\_\_\_\_

**Plan:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Living Will
- Power of Attorney
- Will



# Further refinements

- Considering severity scores
- Other thoughts/suggestions

# Conclusions

- A variety of group dynamics can ultimately effect important medical decisions – including listing decisions.
- There are processes that can be put in place to mitigate these effects:
  - Awareness of dynamics
  - Agreement to address dynamics
- The Candidate Selection Form is one way to address some of these processes