



Implementation Framework for the ISHLT Statement on Transplant Ethics

Background

The Ethics Committee has developed a principles-based ISHLT Statement on Transplant Ethics that articulates the Society's core ethical values while intentionally avoiding case-specific rules or operational guidance. A separate implementation framework determined by the Board of Directors guides the application of those principles to ISHLT programs, beginning with scientific abstracts submitted for the 2027 Annual Meeting.

The purpose of this implementation framework is not to certify the ethical practices of any jurisdiction or institution, but rather to determine whether ISHLT has sufficient confidence that a scientific submission is consistent with the Society's ethical principles to warrant presentation under the ISHLT name.

Guiding Principle

Scientific submissions will be evaluated in a manner consistent with the ISHLT Statement on Transplant Ethics and internationally recognized ethical standards.

The Society's objective is to promote ethical science through a fair, transparent, and principled review process.

Standard of Review

ISHLT will determine whether it has **reasonable confidence** that research involving human organ transplantation or transplanted human organs or tissues was conducted in a manner consistent with the Society's ethical principles. This determination will be based upon the totality of available information and will not require independent verification that may be impractical or impossible to obtain.

This standard is consistent with how many scientific journals and professional societies evaluate ethical compliance, relying primarily on author and institutional attestations while retaining discretion to investigate credible concerns.

Author Attestation

All submitting authors shall attest that their research complies with:

- The ISHLT Statement on Transplant Ethics
- The Declaration of Istanbul
- The Declaration of Helsinki
- Applicable institutional and national ethical requirements

The Society will presume these attestations are made in good faith unless credible concerns warrant additional review.

Enhanced Ethics Review

Certain submissions may undergo enhanced ethics review when the nature of the research raises questions regarding ethical procurement or use of human organs or tissues.

Enhanced review may include requests for additional information, including:

- Institutional ethics approval
- Confirmation of organ procurement practices
- Additional description of donor authorization procedures
- Other information relevant to the ethical conduct of the research

Society Determination

Following review of the available information, ISHLT may:

- Proceed with scientific review
- Request additional information

Decline the submission if the Society cannot establish reasonable confidence that the research is consistent with its ethical principles

Periodic Review

The implementation framework should be reviewed periodically as international standards, scientific practices, and available evidence evolve.

Implementation

The Board recognizes that application of this framework will require operational procedures for abstract review, publication review, and other Society programs. The Ethics Committee, Scientific Program Committee, Editorial Leadership, and staff are authorized to develop such procedures, provided they remain consistent with the policy principles adopted by the Board. These procedures may be revised from time to time without further Board action unless they materially alter the policy established by this framework.

Board Policy Exception

As a matter of Board policy, research involving human organs or tissues procured in China on or before 1 January 2015 will not be accepted for presentation or publication through ISHLT programs.

The Board selected 1 January 2015 because it represents the date on which reforms intended to end procurement of organs from executed prisoners and transition to a voluntary civilian donation system were announced in China. While the Society recognizes that debate continues regarding the implementation and verification of those reforms, this date provides a clear, objective, and internationally recognized policy milestone from which subsequent research may be evaluated under the Board's implementation framework.

The use of this date should not be interpreted as a determination that all research conducted before January 1, 2015 was unethical, nor does it constitute an endorsement or certification of ethical practices after that date. Rather, it establishes a clear and consistently applied policy for application across ISHLT programs.

Research involving human organs or tissues procured in China after January 1, 2015 will be evaluated under the same reasonable confidence framework applied to all other submissions. Consistent with that framework, ISHLT will rely primarily on author and institutional attestations unless credible information gives the Society reason to request additional information or determine that reasonable confidence cannot be established.

This policy does not establish a general presumption of ethical compliance or non-compliance for any country or healthcare system beyond the specific Board policy described above. The policy is intended to provide consistent application across ISHLT programs and should not be interpreted as a factual determination regarding the ethical conduct of any individual investigator, institution, or study.

Guidance for Abstract Submitters

Ethical Standards

ISHLT is committed to promoting the ethical practice of transplantation and related sciences worldwide.

Research submitted to the ISHLT Annual Meeting must be conducted in accordance with the ISHLT Statement on Transplant Ethics, the Declaration of Istanbul, the Declaration of Helsinki, and applicable institutional and national ethical requirements. Authors are responsible for ensuring that all research involving human participants, organs, or tissues complies with these standards.

Author Attestations

As part of the submission process, the corresponding author will attest that:

- The research complies with the ISHLT Statement on Transplant Ethics
- The research complies with the Declaration of Istanbul and the Declaration of Helsinki
- All required institutional and regulatory approvals were obtained
- The information provided in the submission is complete and accurate to the best of the authors' knowledge

Additional Ethics Review

Research involving human organ procurement, transplantation, transplanted human organs or tissues, or other research raising questions regarding compliance with the ISHLT Statement on Transplant Ethics may be subject to additional ethics review.

Authors may be asked to provide supplementary information, including:

- institutional ethics approvals;
- documentation regarding donor authorization or procurement practices, where applicable;
- clarification of the study population or time period; or
- other information necessary for ISHLT to establish reasonable confidence that the research is consistent with the Society's ethical principles.

Research Involving Human Organs or Tissues Procured in China

Research involving human organs or tissues procured in China on or before January 1, 2015 is not eligible for presentation at the ISHLT Annual Meeting. January 1, 2015 marks the date on which China announced reforms to its organ procurement system and serves as the Board's policy threshold for application of this framework. Research involving human organs or tissues procured after January 1, 2015 will be evaluated under the Society's reasonable confidence framework and may be subject to additional ethics review.

Review Process

ISHLT evaluates submissions based upon the ethical issues presented by the research and the information available to the Society. The Society reserves the right to request additional information or decline submissions when it cannot establish reasonable confidence that the research is consistent with the ISHLT Statement on Transplant Ethics.

This process is intended to ensure that scientific excellence and ethical integrity remain inseparable components of the ISHLT scientific program.