Ontario Genetics Advisory Committee

Terms of Reference

I. Background

Ontario Health has a legislated mandate to manage health service needs across Ontario, consistent with the Ministry of Health's health system strategies, to ensure the quality and sustainability of the Ontario health system.

Ontario Health partially fulfills its mandate through the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee (OHTAC), which reviews the best available evidence on the provision of funding for health care services and medical devices and then, after careful deliberation, makes recommendations. OHTAC's recommendations receive approval from the Ontario Health management before being finalized.

The Ontario Genetics Advisory Committee (OGAC) is a standing subcommittee of OHTAC. This document sets out the terms of reference for OGAC.

II. Role

In accordance with the OHTAC terms of reference, the function of any subcommittee is to advise OHTAC. OGAC's role is to advise OHTAC on the clinical utility, validity, and cost effectiveness of new and existing genetic and genomic tests in Ontario to support OHTAC's role in making recommendations.

OGAC considers evidence that systematically appraises a genetic test in a scientifically sound and objective manner. Such evidence includes the therapeutic advantages and disadvantages of a genetic test; its cost-effectiveness; societal, ethical, and patient perspectives; and implications for health system resources.

III. Membership

Membership includes OGAC committee members and the chair and vice-chair:

- OGAC consists of 12 to 15 committee members, including the chair and vice-chair
- All members serve on a volunteer basis

- All members, including the OGAC chair and vice-chair, are approved by the OHTAC chair
- Ontario Health aims to include individuals with expertise in:
    o Laboratory medicine
    o Genetics and molecular science
    o Clinical or genetic epidemiology
    o Health care provision
    o Ethics
- At least 2 members are individuals who can contribute patient, caregiver, family member perspectives and who are not current or former health care professionals
- Ontario Health strives to include individuals who represent Ontario's diversity

IV.   Termination of Membership

An individual may resign their membership at any time via written notification to the OGAC chair. At the discretion of the OHTAC chair and upon written notification, a member's appointment may be terminated at any time within the membership term.

V.   Nomination of Member

- A public call for membership nominations is done periodically as needed.
- The nomination process consists of the following steps:
    1. The existing OGAC membership is reviewed with respect to the expertise referenced in "Membership," above
    2. The public call for nominations may specify particular expertise if the criteria referenced in the "Membership" section are underrepresented among OGAC members
    3. Nominations are reviewed by Ontario Health staff in conjunction with the OGAC chair

VI.   Terms of Appointment & Appointment Process

- Each member of OGAC is appointed for a 3-year term, renewable up to 2 times for a total of 3 consecutive terms (i.e., 9 years of service).
- All initial appointments are approved by the OHTAC chair
- Appointments of OGAC members, including OGAC chair and vice chair, are renewed at the recommendation of the OHTAC chair

VII.   Chair

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The OGAC chair:

- Provides leadership to OGAC and represents OGAC on OHTAC May appoint the vice chair (or OGAC member delegate if the vice chair role is unfilled) to chair all or part of a meeting in instances where it is necessary for the chair to recuse themself.
- Performs the functions necessary to carry out the OGAC terms of reference (with the support of Ontario Health staff):
  - Presides at all OGAC meetings and is responsible for the general supervision of the affairs and business of OGAC
  - Ensures that all OGAC members fulfill their responsibilities as outlined under the OGAC terms of reference
  - Acts as the liaison between OGAC and OHTAC
  - Acts as the main liaison between OGAC and Ontario Health staff, to maintain a constructive and collaborative relationship that maximizes the impact of the committee's work
  - Maintains the integrity of OGAC and its work by ensuring members follow the conflict-of-interest guidelines, in consultation with Ontario Health staff
  - Reviews each Ontario Health recommendation pertaining to genetic tests before public posting
  - Participates in the committee membership selection process
  - Participates as a member of OHTAC

VIII. Vice-Chair

The OGAC vice-chair performs the functions necessary to carry out the OGAC terms of reference when the chair is unable to do so. If the chair is unable to attend a meeting, the vice-chair or OGAC member delegate assists the OGAC chair with any pre-meeting planning and preparatory work and chairs the meeting.

The vice-chair also:

- Chairs meetings when the chair declares a conflict of interest with regard to a specific meeting agenda item
- Helps the chair develop meeting agendas
- Helps the chair review each Ontario Health recommendation before public posting
- Participates in committee membership selection process

The chair may delegate the vice chair role to an OGAC member if needed.

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IX.   Ex-officio Membership

- One Ontario Health staff should be ex-officio, non-voting members of OGAC. The OH ex-officio role can be delegable.
- OHTAC will approve 1 or 2 members from the Ministry of Health, determined in consultation with the ministry, as ex-officio, non-voting members. The Ministry of Health ex-officio member(s) can be delegable.

X.   Attendance

OGAC members are expected to attend OGAC meetings in person or remotely by teleconference or video conference. Members who are absent for more than 3 OGAC meetings per year may have their membership revoked by the OHTAC chair.

XI.   Frequency of Meetings

OGAC meets regularly throughout the year at the call of the chair. Typically, OGAC meets 4 to 8 times per year.

XII.   Quorum

The quorum for normal business of OGAC meetings is 50% of members, including the chair and vice-chair, either in person or via teleconference/video conference. If a quorum does not exist, then no business is transacted, and the meeting is adjourned.

XIII.   Voting

- OGAC's decisions are normally made by consensus of those members present
- Voting is used only when consensus cannot be reached or in exceptional circumstances
- Before a decision to move to a vote is made, the chair, in all cases, considers whether continuing the discussion at a subsequent meeting is likely to lead to consensus
- Voting, where required, is by show of hands, unless circumstances require a ballot, and decisions are determined by a simple majority of those members present

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- Generally, voters' identity is not recorded in the minutes; however, members may request that their opinion and vote be recorded
- The chair votes only in the event of a tie
- Only committee members (including the vice-chair) present at the meeting are eligible to vote. There is no proxy voting
- Ex-officio members are not eligible to vote
- No member may vote on any motion if they may have a conflict of interest, as determined by the chair (see "Conflict of Interest," below)

XIV.   Minutes

Ontario Health staff prepare the minutes of OGAC meetings with the assistance of the OGAC chair and vice-chair. The minutes list the names of the members present and are reviewed and approved at a later OGAC meeting, where they are corrected, if necessary. The minutes are the official record of the meeting and an accurate record of the actual motions, resolutions, and results of deliberations, including the reasons for any committee recommendations.

XV.   Rationale for Recommendation

OGAC provides the reasons supporting its advice to OHTAC concerning an evidence evaluation, and these reasons are made publicly available.

XVI.   Conflict of Interest

Committee members will complete a conflicts of interest declaration annually. In addition, as standard process OHTAC members are required to declare any actual, apparent, or potential conflicts of interest related to committee business at the start of each meeting. Mitigation strategies for identified conflict of interests will be determined in consultation with chair and OH staff.

XVII. Confidentiality

It is prohibited to disclose any data, materials, or information obtained in the course of committee participation that is not generally available to the public.

XVIII. Secretariat

Ontario Health staff provide secretariat support for OGAC processes and meetings. This secretariat function includes:

- Providing all administrative pre- and post-meeting support
- Providing support during meetings, including minute-taking
- Coordinating the preparation and distribution of meeting materials, including but not limited to agendas, meeting minutes, and evidence reports
- Coordinating and distributing meeting materials no less than 7 calendar days before OGAC meetings
- Ensuring OGAC meeting proceedings and meeting venues are accessible to people with disabilities

Ontario Health staff keep a permanent record of minutes of all OGAC meetings, reflecting attendance, key advice to OHTAC, and committee actions including results of any votes undertaken and the number of members with declared conflicts of interest during the meeting.

XIX. Communications

Ontario Health staff provide communications and issue management support. OGAC members should refer all media enquiries to the Ontario Health staff.

XX. Expenses

Ontario Health reimburses travel and meal expenses incurred by the members, in accordance with its Travel, Meal, and Hospitality Policy.

XXI. Honorarium

Ontario Health may provide honorariums to voting members as a gesture of goodwill in recognition or acknowledgement of their gratuitous contributions, in accordance with the Ontario Health Honorarium Policy.

XXII. Review

Terms of reference, mandate, activities, membership, and relevance of the committee are reviewed annually.

Date approved: November 3, 2023

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