Each issue of OAC News will feature an update on the current advocacy efforts of the OAC and give you, our reader, an opportunity to get involved. The OAC encourages patients to become advocates for change. You can impact how others view obesity and influence decision makers. Help us to eliminate the negative stigma associated with obesity and make sure that obesity is treated as a disease, allowing for increased access to safe and effective medical treatment.

What is Advocacy?
Advocacy is defined as the act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea or policy. Advocacy comes in many forms. It can be communicating with your elected officials, government regulators, insurers, the media and the general public.

Why is Advocacy Important?
Elected officials, government regulators, insurers and the media play a significant role in our society and healthcare. Often, the laws, rules and/or perceptions they create directly influence our day-to-day lives and the medical treatments we receive. However, the majority of decision makers know little about obesity, its effects and treatments. The OAC seeks to increase awareness by encouraging those affected by obesity to become advocates. It is through the voice of patients, family members and medical professionals that we can spread how current, pending and future laws, regulations, policies and perceptions impact obese Americans.

The OAC’s Initial Focus
The OAC’s initial focus will be to improve access to the medical treatment of obesity. Whether medical weight management and/or weight-loss surgery, the OAC believes that patients, with guidance from healthcare professionals, should have access to and insurance coverage for the treatment of obesity. Too often insurers, employers and other payors of health benefits specifically limit or exclude the treatment of obesity. The OAC believes obesity is a disease and coverage of its treatment should be included in insurance policies. The decision not to provide coverage is a short-term economic decision that endangers the long-term health and increases future costs for obese Americans.

How do you learn more about advocacy and becoming an advocate? The OAC has produced a variety of materials to guide you in becoming an effective advocate. They include our advocacy primer, “Your Voice Makes A Difference. A Guide On How You Can Help Fellow Patients Affected By Obesity,” state specific advocacy guides (see below) and a fact sheet titled, “Fact Sheet: Why it makes sense to provide treatment for obesity through bariatric surgery.”

These resources are available under the “Advocacy” section of the OAC Web site (www.obesityaction.org) or by contacting the OAC National Office at (800) 717-3117. The OAC encourages you to become an advocate for change.

Advocacy News
Medicaid Coverage of Obesity Surgery Comes Under Attack

Recently, efforts were made to eliminate coverage of weight-loss surgery under the Medicaid and low-income insurance programs in Tennessee and Wisconsin.

The OAC, among a wide group of other organizations, surgeons, physicians and patients, successfully educated legislators and regulators on the importance of accessing weight-loss surgery as a treatment option for the morbidly obese. As a result of these efforts, both Tennessee and Wisconsin have retained weight-loss surgery as a covered benefit.

Want to learn about the complimentary advocacy resources offered by the OAC?
To learn more, visit www.obesityaction.org.
The mission of the Obesity Action Coalition is to elevate and empower those affected by obesity through education, advocacy and support.

About the OAC

The Obesity Action Coalition is a non profit patient organization dedicated to educating and advocating on behalf of the millions of Americans affected by obesity. By strictly representing the interests and concerns of obese patients, the OAC is a unique organization with a patient-focused approach to obesity. To learn more about the OAC, visit www.obesityaction.org or contact the National Office at (800) 717-3117.

OAC Resources

Through education and advocacy, patients need to get involved to help drive change in the obesity community. The OAC provides several beneficial resources for patients, as well as professionals.

- OAC Introductory Brochure
- Obesity Action Alert
- OAC News
- State-specific Guides to Advocating for Improved Access to Obesity Treatments
- Weight-loss Surgery Coverage Fact Sheet
- The OAC Web site: www.obesityaction.org

All OAC resources are complimentary and may be ordered in bulk. To request materials or an order form, please contact the OAC National Office at (800) 717-3117 or send an email to info@obesityaction.org.

OAC membership

Membership in the Obesity Action Coalition allows the patient voice to be heard in the fight against obesity. By building a coalition of members, consisting of patients, family members and professionals, the OAC strives to educate and advocate on behalf of the millions who are affected by obesity. Membership benefits include:

- Official charter membership card/certificate
- OAC News - the OAC’s quarterly newsletter
- Subscription to Obesity Action Alert - a monthly e-newsletter
- Representation through advocacy in addition to information on advocacy issues concerning patients

Membership Application

Name: ________________________________
Company Name: ____________________________
Address: ________________________________
City: __________ State: ______ Zip: __________
Phone: ________________________________
E-mail: ________________________________

Payment Information

Enclosed is my check made payable to the Obesity Action Coalition for $ _______.
Please charge my credit card for my membership fee of $ _______.

Credit Card #: ________________________________
Expiration: ______ Name on Card: ________________
Signature: ________________________________

Please mail to: Obesity Action Coalition 4511 North Himes Ave, Suite 250 Tampa, FL 33614
Or fax to: (813) 873-7838

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If you have questions about OAC membership, please contact the National Office at (800) 717-3117.