Obesity and Stigma

Obesity discrimination is one of last forms of acceptable discrimination in today’s society. Quite often obese individuals find themselves the target of discrimination in a variety of settings such as employment, healthcare, education and much more.

Consequences of Weight Bias

Taken together, the consequences of being denied jobs, rejected by peers, or treated inappropriately by healthcare professionals because of one’s weight can have a serious and negative impact on quality of life. Obese individuals suffer terribly from this, both from direct discrimination and from more subtle forms of bias and stigma that are frequently encountered.

Weight bias can have psychological, social and physical health consequences on those affected by this disease. Psychological outcomes can include depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, poor body image and much more. The social effects can be social rejection by peers, poor quality of interpersonal relationships and potential negative impact on academic outcomes. The physical health outcomes can include binge-eating and unhealthy weight-control practices.

Reducing the Weight Bias

Given how pervasive and acceptable weight stigma is in our society, transforming societal attitudes and enacting laws that prohibit discrimination based on weight are needed in order to eliminate the problem of stigma toward obese individuals. Although this requires enormous efforts, there are other important steps that can be taken by both patients and their healthcare providers to help improve the daily functioning and well-being of obese individuals. Patients who are struggling with weight stigma can begin to approach this problem by becoming advocates for themselves. This includes identifying situations in which they have been stigmatized because of their weight and deciding how best to handle the situation to achieve positive emotional health to help prevent additional stigma from occurring.

How You Can Help

The OAC has recently developed a stigma section devoted to education and awareness of the stigma associated with obesity, morbid obesity and childhood obesity. The section discusses the negative stigma often associated with obesity and details ways to reduce the stigma associated with this disease.

If you see any examples of the negative stigma associated with obesity portrayed in your daily life, we encourage you to share them with the OAC by e-mailing info@obesityaction.org.
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

The OAC provides several beneficial resources for patients, as well as professionals. 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.

Brochures/Guides
- Are you living with Obesity?
- Advocacy Primer: Your Voice Makes a Difference
- BMI Chart
- Understanding Obesity Series
  - Understanding Obesity Brochure
  - Understanding Obesity Poster
- Understanding Morbid Obesity Brochure
- Understanding Childhood Obesity Brochure
- Understanding Childhood Obesity Poster
- OAC Insurance Guide: Working with Your Insurance Provider
- State-specific Advocacy Guides
- Support Group Kit

Newsletters
- Obesity Action Alert - the OAC’s free monthly electronic newsletter
- OAC News - OAC’s quarterly education and advocacy newsletter

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: _______________________