



Obesity Care Continuum Supports the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act of 2013

The Obesity Care Continuum (OCC) applauds Senators Carper (D-DE) and Murkowski (R-AK) and Representatives Cassidy (R-LA) and Kind (D-WI) for introducing the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act of 2013 (S. 1184/HR 2415). This legislation will provide Medicare beneficiaries and their health care providers with meaningful tools to treat and reduce obesity by improving access to obesity screening and counseling services, and new prescription drugs for chronic weight management.

With a combined membership of over 125,000 healthcare professionals and patient advocates, the Obesity Care Continuum is dedicated to promoting access to, and coverage of, the continuum of care surrounding the treatment of overweight and obesity. The OCC also challenges weight bias and stigma oriented policies – whenever and wherever they occur. The OCC is a coalition of the Obesity Action Coalition, the Obesity Society, the American Dietetic Association, the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, and the American Society of Bariatric Physicians.

Specifically, the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act requires the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to highlight and provide additional information regarding Medicare coverage of intensive behavioral counseling for obesity for seniors and their doctors. This legislation also gives CMS the authority to enhance beneficiary access to the new Medicare benefit for intensive behavioral counseling services by allowing additional types of health care providers to offer these services. Finally, the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act allows CMS to provide coverage of prescription drugs under Medicare Part D for chronic weight management to individuals who are affected by obesity, or overweight with one or more co-morbidities.

Obesity is a complex, multifactorial, and chronic disease, requiring a comprehensive approach to both prevent and treat. Multiple large epidemiologic studies have demonstrated that increasing body mass index (BMI), particularly above 30 (defined as obesity), is associated with an increased risk of premature death. This relationship is constant for various age groups, ethnic and minority populations and in different geographic locations. In addition, obesity is associated with multiple co-morbidities, which are either caused or worsened by obesity. Furthermore, these co-morbid conditions are expected to improve or resolve if effective weight loss is achieved.

Evidence-based literature clearly demonstrate that people affected by obesity can substantially improve their health and quality of life when they have access to a continuum of medically necessary treatment – including behavioral, nutritional, pharmaceutical, psychosocial and surgical treatment. Even a 5-10 percent weight loss produces clinically significant reductions in risk factors for chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, arthritis, heart disease, mental illness, lipid disorders, pulmonary disease (obstructive sleep apnea and restrictive lung disease), and certain cancers.

Similar to many other medical conditions, obesity is a complex, multifactorial chronic disease, requiring a multidisciplinary treatment approach. This approach must encompass the best standards of care, both in terms of the treatments chosen, and the care coordination and clinical environment in which they are delivered. Just as those affected by heart disease receive their care through a coordinated multidisciplinary treatment team, those affected by obesity should also follow a similar continuum of coordinated care. Because of the complex nature of obesity and its variety of impacts on both physical and mental health, effective treatment requires the coordinated services of providers from several disciplines and professions (both physician and non-physician) within both of these treatment areas.

For these reasons, the OCC strongly supports the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act of 2013. We encourage all members of Congress to cosponsor and support final passage of this critical legislation.

About OCC Member Organizations:

About the Obesity Action Coalition (OAC)

The OAC is the ONLY non-profit organization whose sole focus is representing individuals affected by obesity. Founded in 2005, the OAC remains at the forefront of the fight against obesity. From advocating on Capitol Hill for access to obesity treatments to publishing hundreds of educational resources for individuals affected, the OAC truly represents the voice of all those affected by obesity. For more information on the OAC, please visit

www.obesityaction.org.

About the Obesity Society (TOS)

The Obesity Society is the leading scientific society dedicated to the study of obesity. The Obesity Society is committed to encouraging research on the causes, treatment, and prevention of obesity as well as to keeping the scientific community and public informed of new advances in the field. For more information, please visit

www.obesity.org.

About the American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS)

The mission of the ASMBS is to advance the art and science of bariatric surgery by continued encouragement of its members to: improve the care and treatment of people with obesity and related diseases; advance the science and understanding of metabolic surgery; foster communication between health professionals on obesity and related conditions; and advocate for health care policy that ensures patient access to high-quality prevention and treatment of obesity. For more information, please visit

www.asmbs.org.

About the American Society of Bariatric Physicians (ASBP)

Founded in 1950, ASBP (www.asbp.org) is the oldest medical association dedicated to the treatment of obesity and associated diseases. ASBP is a collaborative organization that provides its members practical information and business tools to implement a successful medical bariatric practice.

About the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association) is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. The Academy is committed to improving the nation's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy. Visit the Academy at www.eatright.org.

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