

Is AMA Declaration on Obesity a Big Fat Problem for Workers' Comp?

By [Robert Wilson](#) 06/19/2013 11:45:00

I am apparently sick. Gravely ill; in need of medical treatment, which will no doubt involve multiple co-pays, lab visits, and a multitude of new prescriptions. My disease?

Hi. My name is Bob Wilson, and I am an obese man.

(I will pause while you all say “Hiiii Bob”)

Yesterday the American Medical Association elevated obesity by declaring it a disease, and bestowed upon it all the medical treatment necessary to tackle this enormous problem. An [LA Times article](#) posted in the [LinkedIn Workers' Compensation Roundtable](#) group by member Leslie Yates tells the sordid tale. Suddenly, 33% of the United States population is ill, stricken with a terrible disease. We haven't seen such a large shift in medical classifications since they made pain the 5th vital sign.

And we all know that worked out quite well.

So, what is obesity? According to common convention, it is anybody who is 20% or more over their ideal weight, or has a Body Mass Index greater than 30.

Let's diagnose my own condition, shall we? I am 5 feet, 11 inches tall. This morning I weighed 226.9 pounds. [Rush University Medical Center](#) says my ideal weight should be between 155 and 189lbs. Are they frickin' kidding me? I've eaten sandwiches that weigh more than 155 pounds. I would need to catch another, more immediately lethal disease to ever have a hope of seeing 155 pounds. At any rate, 20% of 189 is 37.8lbs, which means that anyone my size that is over 226.8lbs is obese. Damn. I need to shed that 1/10th of a pound as quickly as possible. It is the only way to cure my (newly declared) disease. It could have been worse. 2 years ago or so I weighed over 270lbs. That would have meant I was really sick. Morbidly sick, in fact.

But, as sad as it is to admit, it is not always about me. This shift could have heavy implications for the workers' compensation industry. When Ms. Yates posted the article, she suggested this could become a serious concern if what was formerly a co-morbidity issue now becomes a secondary claim, when workers off the job and reacting to meds put on a great deal of weight. I would suggest however, that the risk extends beyond the secondary claim scenario. If this follows it's natural path, then sedentary jobs and those workers exposed to conditions prone to make them fat could start filing primary claims for treatment of their medically recognized condition.

Taco Bell better come up with a gym membership program for its employees, and fast.

This could be a gigantic, oversized problem. Pretty soon we will all be out on workers comp, having identified our work desks or delivery vehicles as the culprit for our (medically recognized) obesity. To compound the issue, when we all arrive at the hospital for treatment, there will be very few nurses to assist us as we waddle in, as most will already be off the job for the identical reasons.

There is one benefit, however. The AMA declaration means that my weight is no longer my fault. It is someone else's responsibility, and that is terrific news. I think I'll swing by Taco Bell to celebrate, while they still have someone manning the store.

Email this story to a friend (above right) or share it with your social network!

About From Bob's Cluttered Desk - "A Place Online for our CEO to Opine"



Robert Wilson is President & CEO of WorkersCompensation.com, and "From Bob's Cluttered Desk" comes his (often incoherent) thoughts, ramblings, observations and rants - often on workers' comp or employment issues, but occasionally not.

Bob has a couple unique personality characteristics. He firmly believes that everyone has the right to his (Bob's) opinion, and while he may not always be right, he is never in doubt. Enter at your own risk, and like all of our blog areas, we encourage you to read the disclaimer at the bottom of the page.

We're not responsible for this guy.....

Bob is an accomplished speaker for the workers' compensation industry. He is available for conferences, corporate events, children's birthday parties and Bar Mitzvahs. You may [access his Speakers Brief here](#).

Join Bob and almost 9,000 employers and professionals on his LinkedIn group - the [Workers Compensation Roundtable. Join here today!](#)

Powered by [Vivvo CMS](#) v4.7