

Being the caregiver for my wife who has Spinocerebellar Ataxia Type 10 (SCA10), makes me well aware of how hard it is for those with mobility problems to lose weight. Some people just can't exercise, other than what they can do while lying in bed. Besides, few obese individuals are helped by changes in their living patterns alone. They need medical treatments that are more likely to help them lose significant weight than pharmaceuticals and don't involve extensive body altering operations.

My wife began to have a weight problem in about the last year and a half. I had surgery last December, and I couldn't pick her up out of her wheelchair to get her in the shower. This forced me to get her a caregiver five days a week, three hours a day. Insurance refused to pay for the care, so now we're stuck with the \$960 monthly bill. I'm getting my strength back, but she is getting heavier and heavier. It's not like she's eating a lot, but exercising in bed is not working out too well for her. She's using resistance bands to strengthen her legs, though the deterioration of her muscles prevents her from locking her legs when she stands.

My wife is certainly not alone in her extra pounds being brought on by an illness that limits her movement. She wants to lose weight, and has tried diet pills, but they only make her jittery. She gets depressed by her lack of mobility. I can see this when she can't get into my truck to go to the casino or to the doctor. She is not big enough for a bariatric surgery, though losing weight would benefit her and her caregivers. She gets frustrated because she understands the extra weight is a burden for us.

Many people like my wife are likely to be helped by therapeutic weight-loss developments like VBLOC. The therapy has proven to help people lose weight, without involving an invasive and irreversible surgery. Just as SCA10 is a genetic disease, many people have a genetic or cultural predisposition to have extra pounds. They and their loved ones deserve to have all valid weight-loss options on the table, so they can reverse the misfortune handed to them. It's essential that we have access to new treatments sooner, rather than later. Please consider this when making your final decision on approving new medical ways to help people lose weight.