

OBESITY TREATMENTS

Patented weight loss schemes: There are more than a million.

Engineers solve problems. Sometimes, numerous “solutions” are proposed for a problem, none really works, and the problem just gets worse.

One example is obesity. I can relate: at my age, if I miss a single workout during the week, it seems I gain 10 lbs. If you use Google Patents and type in “obesity” you will receive over a million patent results. The following are a few interesting obesity treatment patent examples.

■ **MAGIC PILLS** Patents for drugs purporting to treat obesity include amphetamines (Patent No. 3,369,967 dated Feb. 20, 1968). Noting the adverse side effects associated with taking amphetamines, a treatment based on the amino acid histidine was proposed by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in Patent No. 3,867,539 (Feb. 18, 1975). After the fen-phen debacle, we should be wary of any diet pill.

■ **COMPUTER SOLUTIONS** An early computerized weight loss management system is disclosed in Patent No. 4,951,197 dated Aug. 21, 1990. The abstract reads: “A weight loss management system utilizes a computer analysis of a participant’s past medical history, eating habits, body measurements, exercise level, and taste preferences to provide a menu of a specified number of calories to maintain a reasonable weight.” That particular patent is widely referenced including Weight Watchers Ltd. Patent No. 6,436,036 (Aug. 20, 2002) for its proprietary point value weight loss system.

■ **SURGICAL SOLUTIONS** More drastic weight loss measures include medical operations where something inflatable is placed in your stomach to make you feel full. Of the numerous patent examples in this category, included are Patent Nos. 4,133,315 (Jan. 9, 1979), 4,899,747 (Feb. 13, 1990), and 4,485,805 (Dec. 4, 1984). An early gastric band device is disclosed in Patent No. 4,592,339 dated June 3, 1986.

■ **COVER IT UP** It was a long time ago that inventors proposed different ways to hide obesity. Patent No. 1,184,516 (1916) is for an obesity belt

with a very uncomfortable looking spring-like ring coupled to a belt for pulling your tummy in. Apparently, these obesity belts were pretty popular back in the day. In obesity belt Patent No. 806,482 (December 5, 1905) the inventor alleges:

“It is well known that by manipulating the body with a corrugated roller of wood, rubber, or other firm material the massage effect reduces weight and flesh. Acting on this principle I provide means for bringing a series of these rollers into position on the body, and particularly across the abdomen, in such a way that the natural movements of the body will cause the rollers to act both vertically and laterally, so as to subject the body to a continuous, but mild and yet effective, massaging, thereby producing the desired effect.”

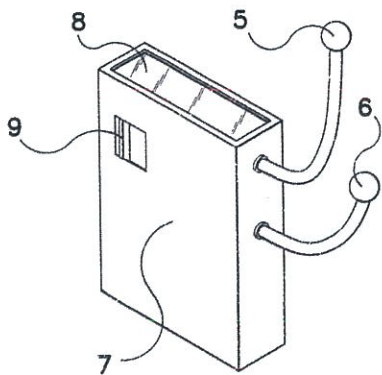
■ **STIMULATION** Published Patent Application No. 2013/0096469 (April 18, 2013) states: “It is the purpose of this invention to provide methods and systems for non-invasive neuromodulation of deep-brain targets using ultrasound to treat obesity and eating disorders.” Medtronic Inc., Patent No. 8,538,532 (Sept. 17, 2013), proposes electrical stimulations delivered to a patient’s stomach to induce “gastric distention” making you feel full.

■ **THROAT MONITORING** I like the “E-fit monitor” device of Patent No. 6,135,950. One sensor microphone is taped to your Adam’s apple, and a processor inside the wearable unit sets off an alarm if your swallowing rate is too high.

Will there ever be a safe and effective weight loss pill, computerized treatment, weight loss surgery, or other method? After millions of tries over many years, maybe this is one problem for which there is no simple solution.

One recent patent for treating obesity is No. 8,272,152 (Dec. 17, 2013) which claims a dieting process with just two steps: first, eat less, and second, exercise more. Just kidding.**ME**

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EATING ALARM

The E-fit monitor, U.S. Patent No. 6,135,950, includes a microphone sensor (5 in the diagram) that alerts a processor to set off an alarm when the wearer swallows too fast.