

Healthcare Workers Injured Due to Patient Weight

When people consider jobs that have a lot of heavy lifting, they might think of those who work in retail, manufacturing or shipping. The healthcare industry may not be the first thing that comes to mind. However, many individuals that have health problems are obese, which can place an additional burden on those treating the injured or sick patient. While [workers' compensation](#) may provide benefits for those injured on the job, new regulations may be necessary to help prevent these injuries from occurring.

According to Amy Williamson, a hospital workplace safety coordinator, nurses lift 1.8 tons every day. While there are "guidelines" in place to limit this amount to 35 pounds each time, they are not rules that hospitals are forced to follow.

There are only 10 states that actually have laws that have rules discussing how heavy patients should receive care, and Pennsylvania is not one of them.

To help reduce the amount of lifting that needs to be done, many hospitals have started using permanent or portable lifts. These machines do the heavy lifting for the nurses, which prevent many of the serious back, shoulder and neck injuries that often result when someone tries to lift objects that are difficult to move.

The lifts can place patients into machines to take x-rays, or help a patient receive more complete care. Proponents of portable or permanent lifts also stress that the lifts can help ensure that there are no additional injuries suffered as a result of being moved, which can happen frequently, especially when critical care is necessary.

Hospitals and nursing homes are slowly starting to make these

changes. As the population changes, the individual institutions often react much faster than legislatures.

Source: Delaware Online "[Weight of patients becomes workplace safety issue](#)" July 23, 2012.