

## Bariatrics Furnishings...A Very Hot Market!

*By Robert J. Oosdyke*

President, Health Care Furnishings, Inc. (HCFI)

Published in First Moves Sept 04 Issue

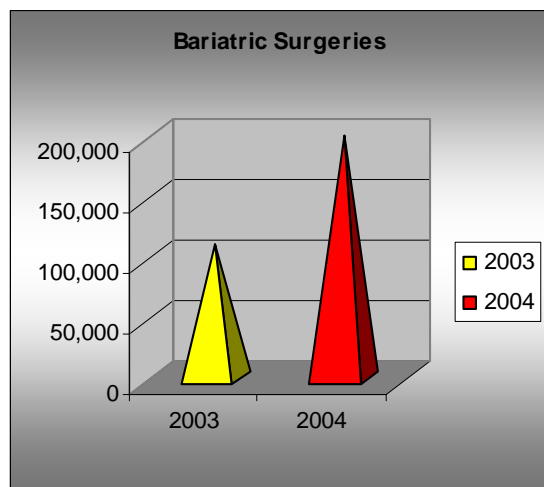
Why is everyone entering the bariatrics market? This is an easy answer today. Literally there isn't one company dominating this furnishings market and that equates to an ability to sell bariatrics if you are fortunate to have a bariatric product or a line of bariatric furnishings products. Also, the healthcare furnishings market is approximately \$1.8 billion and the size alone implies this is an area not to be ignored, as bariatrics is approximately a \$400 million market.

We have other areas with great potential for bariatric sales as well, from bathing products, beds and mattresses, blood pressure cuffs, clothing (patient gowns), lifts and scales, mobility products (walkers, wheelchairs, canes, crutches), nutritional products, patient tables, pharmaceuticals, pneumatic compression devices, surgical instruments, equipment, supplies and transfer devices. Last, but certainly not least, floor mounted toilets will be in vogue as wall mounted toilets can and will break under the strain of a bariatric patient.

We also need to remember that many of our nurses today are over 45 years of age, overweight and in need of specialty products to assist them in providing quality care to their patients.

According to past U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, 61% of people in the U.S. are overweight and 14% of our children are facing a life of obesity. Current Surgeon General Richard Carmona stated in June, 2004, *"As we look to the future and where childhood obesity will be in 20 years, it is every bit as threatening to us as is the terrorist threat we face today. It is the threat from within."* This is a frightening statement!

Additionally, the Surgeon General stated that the medical cost for illness related to obesity is \$117 billion a year. Over 300,000 Americans have undergone obesity surgery since 1986; however, over 110,000 patients underwent this surgery in 2003 and another 200,000 are expected to have surgery in 2004. The market is anticipating a rapid growth for years to come and the following graphics demonstrate this phenomenon best. But remember, from 1986 to 2002 a total of only 300,000 people had the obesity surgery.



Consequently, healthcare furnishings manufacturers, healthcare device manufacturers and distributors of all types have a wonderful opportunity ahead.

At HCFI, we are focusing upon many areas of interest in the furnishings arena for manufacturers, dealers and distributors but the bariatric market represents a breakthrough as did the glove market or endoscopic instruments in past years.

Today the bariatric market isn't dominated by any one in particular. Many companies such as Hill-Rom, Nemschoff, Brayton, NewCare, Stryker Medical, Softcare and a few others, have a lead but again, no one dominates...yet. If you think about the large distributors in furnishings such as Boise Office Solutions (now merging with OfficeMax), Corporate Express, or manufacturers such as Steelcase, HON, Herman Miller and others, the healthcare bariatric market could become very interesting, very quickly.

Images of America (IOA) is developing some very nice products and niche companies which will play a big role in bariatrics in the near future. Fabio Delmestri, Vice President of IOA Healthcare Furniture, sees the healthcare market as an aggregate of niches and states, *"It is our strategy to seek out and focus our development efforts and our vertically integrated manufacturing process on these challenging areas. The bariatric market is certainly one that demands innovation in furniture. We started in the year 2000 by developing structures and mechanisms that support bariatric loads of 650lbs to 1000 lbs and we now offer a complete line of bariatric patient room recliners, sleepers and stationary chairs that are enthusiastically embraced by the community of healthcare providers."*

China hasn't impacted this market to any extent yet; however, a complete bariatric line will surface to compete with the U.S. manufacturers and/or be sold through current manufacturers or the new consolidators in healthcare furnishings that desire to enter healthcare in a much larger way.

After owning NCI and consulting in the healthcare device side of the market for over 24 years and after spending the last two years developing the concept of HCFI while consulting in the healthcare furnishings arena, it is apparent to me that the healthcare device companies such as Hill Rom or Stryker certainly have advantages over the current manufacturers of furniture in *marketing* to the healthcare customers, Group Purchasing Organizations and Integrated Delivery Networks. To state it simply, they understand healthcare implicitly.

However, if the key *"consolidators of the furnishings industry"* stand up, take charge and gain knowledge of healthcare as the key players have, the landscape could become different in future years in the selling of furniture and furnishings to the healthcare community.

Are you getting your share of this ever-growing market? If not, contact HCFI today at [info@hcfi.net](mailto:info@hcfi.net) or call **949-481-6888** to learn more about "Selling to the Healthcare Market". And visit our website at [www.hcfi.net](http://www.hcfi.net) for information on our new, informative and very innovative sales training program entitled *"Health Care 101"*. This program will allow your sales teams to overcome roadblock after roadblock in selling healthcare furnishings. HCFI also provides healthcare strategic planning, market development programs, Group Purchasing Organization and Integrated Delivery Network contract negotiations, and national and regional educational forums for the healthcare furnishings industry.