Health and Treatment Strategies in Obesity
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The explosion of obesity with its multiple comorbidities and devastating effects on all aspects of an individual’s life has brought it to our attention. The increasing number of adolescents affected by obesity as well as the ‘global’ surge of obesity has led to greater interest and newer more effective treatments. The developed countries have a greater prevalence of obesity. While our genetic pool seems to have remained relatively the same over the ages, our environment has changed rapidly. We seem to be consuming more foods that are high in caloric value, while our energy expenditure has lessened by the use of machines that reduce the intensity of labor. The increasing prevalence of obesity in the USA and its medical, social, psychological and economic implications has made it a national health crisis. Obesity has been predicted to be the number one health problem globally by the year 2025 with the USA leading the way. Obesity is thought to be overtaking cigarette smoking to soon become the leading cause of death in the USA.

When compared to other serious health issues like HIV and lung cancer, the funding for obesity research does not match the threat it poses. However, great strides have been made in recent years to discover the cause of obesity as well as successful treatments for it. The discovery of neuropeptides as well as hormones regulating energy metabolism have led to a better understanding of the development of obesity. This has helped open doors to procure possible treatments, the end result hoped for being a medication that affects energy metabolism with effective and long-term weight loss without dangerous side effects. While the perfect drug to cure obesity has eluded us just yet, it does seem to be around the corner. Currently, the most effective treatment for obesity and its comorbidities in selected patients is bariatric surgery.
This volume reviews the strides we have made in our understanding of obesity with a special focus on bariatric surgery. Several nutritional strategies and diets are discussed, with a special section on dietary changes after bariatric surgery.

We have reviewed the most current understanding of the pathophysiology of energy metabolism. While bariatric surgery does produce long-lasting results, patient selection is important, as postoperative compliance is essential for a successful outcome. The prevalence of psychiatric illness in the obese is similar to those with normal weight; however, obese patients seeking treatment have an increased prevalence of psychiatric illness, most commonly major depression. Psychiatric illness is not a contraindication for bariatric surgery; however, it is important that the patient be mentally stable and engaged in treatment to ensure postoperative compliance and optimal outcome. Body image and sexual functioning are closely intertwined with obesity. Due to the rapid weight loss which occurs after bariatric surgery, these aspects need to be assessed pre- and postoperatively to ensure that the patient receives appropriate help to optimize the surgical outcome. Body contouring surgery is helpful in bariatric surgery patients that have massive weight loss. This helps patients improve mobility as well as body image self-esteem as discussed in the chapter by Rajiv Y. Chandawarkar. Binge eating disorder is being recognized as a frequent comorbid condition in the obese. While these patients are effectively treated in the initial 18 months after bariatric surgery, they become ‘grazers’ a year and a half after the surgery and can regain their weight. This volume deals specifically with cognitive behavioral therapy and interpersonal therapy for binge eating disorder that help sustain the benefits of bariatric surgery over a longer term and give the patient alternate coping skills.

The manifold effects that bariatric surgery has on the patient’s health, physical as well as psychological, make it the most effective treatment of obesity and its infiltrative effects on all aspects of the patient’s life. Until we discover the ‘perfect pill’ to overcome morbid obesity, bariatric surgery seems to be the most effective treatment in selected patients.

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