



Foreword

It has now become a truism that obesity is one of the most serious medical problems of the developed world, and however unsettling this may be in the presence of famine and starvation in parts of the developing world, it is nevertheless a situation which must be faced. It has become difficult for endocrinologists to access all of the recent literature on the genetics, metabolic phenotype and treatment of obesity, and Dr. Korbonits has been stunningly successful in putting together an array of chapters from many of the foremost authorities and researchers in this field. With recent data indicating that the surgical therapy of gross obesity is associated with increased longevity, it is now an ideal time to reveal what we know about the causes, metabolic disturbances and treatment of this so common condition. I recommend this volume to all who are beginning research in this area or are responsible for the clinical care of obese patients: this means the volume will be relevant to almost all practising clinicians in 2008.

Ashley B. Grossman, London

Preface

It was the discovery of leptin in 1994 that completely changed endocrinology's attitude to obesity. What had until then been a niche subject with little known pathophysiological pathways, was, by the discovery of a hormone so profoundly affecting weight, suddenly launched into the fast lane of scientific research.

In the current volume we have attempted to summarise key advances in many facets of obesity: in the field of genetics, from the spectacular monogenic and syndromal causes to the less dramatic but more common susceptibility genes, which have only been recently identified; we have explored the effects of obesity in the pregnant mother, in foetal life, in childhood and in old age, and have attempted to draw conclusions from studies of periodic increased weight in animals. We have also mapped out the biochemical and physiological background of the abnormal metabolism in obesity, by scrutinizing the hormones and enzymes most recently implicated in the development, maintenance and consequences of obesity. The 'traditional' hormonal causes of obesity are discussed, as they may occasionally cause a differential diagnostic challenge, and we offer a practical update on clinical approach and treatment of obesity. Finally, we have attempted to reflect the social aspects of obesity in society, and the view of the obese body in art throughout the centuries. While a completely comprehensive overview of the metabolism of obesity is beyond the scope of this book, we have aimed for a timely and wide-ranging update which we believe will be both interesting and pertinent to all endocrine clinicians and researchers.

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