

BLASS, E. M. (2008)

*Obesity: Causes, Mechanisms, Prevention, and Treatment*

Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates

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*Obesity: Causes, Mechanisms, Prevention, and Treatment*, edited by Elliott M. Blass, provides a comprehensive examination of obesity phenomenology. The authors use a biopsychosocial approach to presenting information about the prevention, causes, and treatments of obesity and address the manifestation and course of obesity in both children and adults.

The outset of the book summarizes the biological foundations of obesity by exploring the behavioral and biological interactions that contribute to obesity etiology and the drawbacks to dieting. Ethnic and geographical differences in the epidemiology and untoward medical consequences of obesity are identified and discussed. Cultural, demographic, and age- and gender-based analyses of obesity trends are highlighted by a plethora of statistics and figures in one coherent source. Also included is a thorough review of the relationship between overeating and addiction, as well as the hedonic drive and food preference characteristics of obese individuals. Associations between parental and child weight and food choice preferences in both humans and animals are also explored.

The second half of the book examines prevention strategies, treatment interventions, and social policies related to obesity. An entire chapter is devoted to discussing the use of exercise as a control and prevention tactic. Unique chapters on "built environments," caloric density, and the food stamp program describe the variety of environmental, obesogenic factors contributing to weight problems in modern societies. The relationship between socioeconomic status and obesity, as well as public policy and the economic situations surrounding food availability and choices, are discussed. The book concludes with a brief discussion of obesity treatments and their limited effectiveness.

The strengths of the book include a clear analysis of current research and thoughtful, precise explanations of the biological mechanisms of obesity as they are currently understood. Unfortunately, the book lacks substantial comment on bariatric surgery, which is an important area of obesity treatment. The relatively inchoate nature of weight loss surgery may make this exclusion passable, especially to those more interested in the development and course of obesity. Similarly, it is disappointing that appetite awareness training, intuitive eating, and mindfulness-based eating strategies are not explored, particularly given the mounting research support for their effectiveness in treating a variety of eating-disordered

behaviors. The decision to not discuss these approaches in relation to obesity treatment is particularly unsatisfactory because of their similarities to the Mandometer program, which is cited by the authors as a promising treatment choice. Although the book presents research in a clear manner, some readers may find fault in the limited organization of larger sections (e.g., causes, mechanisms, prevention strategies, and treatments). Creating subsections arguably could have provided more of a reference-style book that is easier to navigate.

Nevertheless, *Obesity: Causes, Mechanisms, Prevention, and Treatment* is a thought-provoking and concise analysis of obesity. The book would be a useful resource for academics, clinicians, and graduate students across various medical, psychological, and nutrition fields. The book is truly a unique contribution to the health-promotion discipline because it provides a detailed and explicable summary of existing literature regarding obesity. Ultimately, the book's multidisciplinary approach and easily comprehensible language make it a palatable text on obesity for a diverse audience.

Joanna M. Marino, Margaret L. Cowles, Troy W. Ertelt, Kathy Korell,  
John Campbell, and F. Richard Ferraro, University of North Dakota

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