

Book Review

David J. Mela (editor). *Food, Diet and Obesity*. Abington, Cambridge, UK: Woodhead Publishing Limited 2005 £150/US\$270/€220 (hardback), pp. 554. ISBN 1 85573 958 5

The editor of *Food, Diet and Obesity* summarises its purpose to be the identification of the different areas where further action is required in order to develop and deliver effective and sustainable weight-control benefits for consumers. The book certainly addresses and achieves this aim in that it deals extensively with diet, food and obesity from many different and wide-ranging perspectives. It addresses the multi-factorial nature of obesity with many diverse chapters covering areas from lifestyle and environmental factors to macronutrient influences and commercial strategies for weight control. Many well-known international experts and well-published authors in the area of obesity have contributed to this very comprehensive book. Each chapter is very well written and wide-ranging with good coverage of the area. Many useful references are also provided for further in-depth reading.

The book contains three sections: contributing factors, macronutrients, and weight control.

The first section has an interesting and informative introduction by Popkin focusing on the alarming global obesity epidemic. This is followed by a series of diverse chapters covering the traditional topics such as energy metabolism, physical activity, and childhood obesity, as well as more recently recognised topics such as nutrient–gene interactions, psychology, sensory responses and portion size. Each of these chapters is well written and extensively researched. This section provides excellent insight and a strong scientific evidence base regarding the topics covered.

In the second section weight loss and weight control are extensively addressed in chapters covering macronutrient influences on body weight, including energy, fat, carbohydrate, protein, alcohol and fibre as well as fat replaces and sweeteners. Many of the chapters provide valuable insight for developing and directing health strategies in addition to identifying research shortcomings and suggesting future research needs.

The third and final section of the book addresses commercial strategies, functional targets, and agents in weight control. This section provides a very wide-ranging insight into weight control. Behaviour and consumer science are effectively addressed in this section. This is very important for understanding complex behavioural interactions with obesity. Additional chapters include fat and weight control, very-low-calorie diets, popular diets, and the more recent associations of Ca and body weight.

The book lacks a chapter that addresses the need for a holistic approach to obesity, which would encompass all of the contributing factors and pull together each of the macronutrient factors into food-based guidelines for prevention and treatment of obesity. Obesity is not necessarily a result of one macronutrient or a single contributing factor but the whole gamut of factors at play concomitantly. Second, in order to effectively bridge the gap between health professionals and industry, some additional chapters from the industrial perspective, including the food industry's approach to preventing obesity, would have been informative.

Overall this is a timely book that brings together much wide-ranging information to provide a useful, comprehensive and scholarly overview of a most important topic. The book will become a much-used resource for many individuals working in the area of obesity, from public health nutritionists and dietitians, to researchers and academics.

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