Preface

Obesity has reached epidemic proportions among most industrialized countries in the world, and unfortunately the United States continues to be a world leader. The impact of obesity on this country’s economy and health care system will be accentuated as obesity quickly becomes the number-one cause of preventable death in the United States.

The National Care Determination released in February 2006 was a landmark development in the treatment of morbid obesity (http://www.cms.hhs.gov/transmittals/downloads/R54NCD.pdf). Within this determination, surgery was defined as the true “standard of care” for morbid obesity, opening access to care for Medicare recipients. Most experts feel that this determination will strongly influence medical policy among private payers nationwide.

At the same time, the National Care Determination placed a relative limit on access to care as weight-loss procedures were restricted to designated “centers of excellence.” We all hope that this restriction to access is short lived as the number of designated centers increases. The intangible positive that has come from the limitation to access is the clear and intuitive need for primary care physicians, internists, and medical subspecialists to work cohesively as a team with surgeons in the management, treatment, and prevention of morbid obesity.

The decision for Elsevier to invite a surgeon teamed with a medical specialist to organize and present this volume is a tremendous step in formulating this much-needed multidisciplinary alliance against obesity. By creating this volume, we hope to achieve three primary objectives.
The first and foremost objective is to put in perspective the impact of obesity on the American economy and the significant health risks related to obesity. The next objective is to delineate the rationale for surgery and the role of the internist in this undertaking. This is a critical point as the internist will continue to have a pivotal role in identifying a surgical candidate, directing a consultation to an appropriate surgeon, assessing outcomes, and identifying known complications of the most common procedures. Lastly, this volume provides a comprehensive summary of the impact of surgery on known comorbidities associated with obesity. In achieving these goals, we have been able to show the value of a much-needed multidisciplinary team approach.

The editors would like to thank all of the contributors to this volume. Its comprehensive overview would not have been possible without their much appreciated effort. In addition, we would like to thank Rachel Glover, Editor for the Medical Clinics of North America, for giving us the distinguished opportunity to serve as her Guest Editors for this unique volume. We hope we have lived up to her insightful vision for this volume as it was truly an honor to serve as her Guest Editors.

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