Preface

Obesity Medicine: A Core Competency for Primary Care Providers

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Few medical topics are more important to be addressed in primary care than obesity. Nearly 40% of American adults have clinical obesity; 70% have a body mass index greater than 25 kg/m².1 Obesity increases the risk for hundreds of diseases, disability, impaired quality of life, and premature mortality, and strikingly increases health care costs.2–8 With such a large proportion of Americans being affected by obesity and its associated conditions, the primary care workforce is best positioned to lead the way toward progress. Unfortunately, that has not been the case. Primary care providers have minimal training and confidence in addressing obesity, and medical credentialing examinations do not sufficiently include questions testing obesity knowledge.7–9 Few patients with obesity receive screening and documentation of obesity in primary care, let alone receive counseling or evidence-based treatment for obesity.10–12

For these reasons, this issue of Medical Clinics of North America focuses on obesity medicine in primary care, offering health care providers guidance on addressing the range of issues surrounding obesity. The initial articles in this issue describe the current state of obesity in 2017, including updated information on the national and international burden of obesity, staging of obesity, models of care, and the (relatively) newly formed specialty of obesity medicine; why obesity should be treated as a disease, including an updated review of causes and mechanisms of obesity and pathways through which obesity leads to comorbidities; and overviews of principles of obesity treatment in primary care and published obesity treatment guidelines. We then review management of obesity in two special populations: older adults and pregnancy, reviewing patient assessment, goals of treatment, and nuances of treatment for each unique patient population. From there, several articles review a range of treatment modalities from
the perspective of the primary care provider: nutrition and lifestyle management, behavioral counseling for obesity, obesity pharmacotherapy, medical devices for obesity treatment, and bariatric surgery. Finally, we conclude with an offering on weight maintenance and long-term management, offering perspectives of both physiology and behavior.

We hope this issue of *Medical Clinics of North America* will be a valuable resource for primary care clinicians, and we hope to see many more publications on this important topic in the future.

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REFERENCES


