

OBESITY AS A HEALTH PROBLEM

Before turning to the anorectic drugs, it is important that we recognize the public health significance of obesity. Although some may believe that excess weight is merely of cosmetic significance, the fact is that obesity is America's number one nutritional problem. Obesity significantly increases the risk of a number of diseases and complicates many other conditions.

It is usually chronic and is difficult to treat. Successful therapy depends upon vigilance and effort throughout the patient's lifetime. In testimony before the Senate Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, on July 27, 1976, the Assistant Secretary for Health, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (DHEW), Dr. Theodore Cooper stated:

In recent years obesity has become a public health problem of considerable importance in the United States. Approximately 20 percent of all adults are overweight to a degree that may interfere with optimal health and longevity. Obesity aggravates cardiovascular disease and osteoarthritis and increases the liability to hypertension, atherosclerosis, hernia, and gallbladder disease. Overweight also may facilitate the emergence of latent diabetes in predisposed individuals as they approach an advanced age and adds to the hazards of surgery; it makes for postural derangement, and in extreme cases, it is the cause of obesity dyspnea