

The Problem of Obesity and the Use of Anorectics

Internationally known medical and nutritional experts in the United States are generally agreed that there are approximately 30 to 40 million Americans between the ages of 21 and 65 who are at least 20 percent overweight.

To be 20 percent overweight is to be "obese", a condition that seriously affects the individual's well-being and life expectancy. Obesity also compounds other diseases. Medically, obesity is correlated with considerable increase in cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes, liver and kidney diseases and even accidents.

Indeed, to be obese is to be ill. The problem was defined by one reputable physician, Dr. Halberstam as follows: ^{1/}

"Fatness may be the single most important illness in America. It is certainly the most important form of malnutrition. Fat people have higher incidence of stroke, of high blood pressure, and, to a less marked degree, heart attacks. On all life insurance tables fat people live shorter lives than normals."
(Emphasis supplied)

In addition to physical disability, the obese frequently carry an additional emotional burden, which Dr. Halberstam has described in these terms:

"Worse, the fat middle-class person lives not only with a physical burden, but with a psychologic stigma. The sociologist, David Riesman, has said that America is a "physionomic democracy." That is, we increasingly will accept into our social circles and business lives people of any race, creed, or color--so long as they are attractive. The other side of this is that we shun the ugly, the crippled, the fat. The next time you are at a gathering of strangers or getting on a bus or sitting down at a lunch counter, check your own reluctance to sit down alongside a fat person.

^{1/} Dr. Michael Halberstam, The Pills in Your Life, Ace Books, 1972, pp. 141-142.