

## Energy and fat

*Energy Balance and Obesity in Man.* By J. S. Garrow. Pp. xii+335. (North Holland: Amsterdam, London; American Elsevier: New York, 1974.) Dfl.80; \$30.80.

THIS is a very well written, highly persuasive, important book which provides all the basic and practical information necessary for an understanding of the problem of obesity.

The trouble with 'obesity' is that it produces emotional reactions which people rationalise from a literature that provides any evidence desired. In medical science there can be few pursuits which affect such large numbers of people with such little effect, as the investigation and treatment of obesity. Of course, few things are as satisfying to the intellectual academic as a problem with little prospect of application to a real-life situation, and that may explain the large volume of contradictory literature on this subject.

In a slightly lengthy introduction, Dr Garrow initiates us into his positive interpretation of this mass of confusing information. His book reviews comprehensively the different methods used to measure the intake and expenditure of energy in man, the theories of the control of energy intake, the part played by physical activity in energy expenditure, and the variable composition of the human body in relation to fat and how this can be measured. The final section is concerned with the difficult, practical problems of how to diagnose and classify an obese patient and includes a critique of the likely effectiveness of the various forms of treatment.

My only serious criticism of this excellent book is that, possibly because the author has apparently become actively interested in obesity only comparatively recently, his interpretation frequently seems biased and somewhat selective. He fails to quote certain relevant literature, especially from the large volume of physiological papers on exercise, and he is perhaps slightly too dogmatic in many of his statements. In those sections in which he has first-hand knowledge—for example, the chapter on "Energy stores: their composition, measurement and control"—he writes clearly and dispassionately in a most stimulating fashion.

I have no hesitation in recommending this book. To my knowledge, it is by far the best book on the subject of energy balance in man. It should be read by everyone involved in the study of obesity—though all should retain certain reserves about accepting totally some of Dr Garrow's views.

J. V. G. A. Durnin

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