

Book review: Best Medicine – Weight Management

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This is another book addressing the disease of obesity, but unlike most of its contemporaries this one is aimed at the patient. The front cover of the book declares that “knowledge can often be the best medicine and BESTMEDICINE (i.e. the title of the series this book is part of) is your inside guide to becoming an expert patient, empowering you to improve your health and well-being together with your doctor”. A tall order certainly, and current and useful information is present in this book, to help the patient become an expert patient. Up-to-date reviews on the disease and adverse health effects of obesity is included (chapter one), then great emphasis is given to the two prescription medications available for weight management along with evidence in support of their effectiveness (chapters 2 and 3). As with all chapters a section of key points is provided.

An obvious omission is a chapter advising the patient on how to go about actually managing their weight. The book should provide detailed advice for patients to try and help them to achieve weight loss. There is a helpful 4th and final chapter called “Improving Practice” which is about how a medical doctor, probably a GP, would go about setting up an obesity / weight management clinic, providing justification as to why weight loss is worthwhile, tips to how to win over colleagues to implement weight management and how to “discover patients”. This is not relevant to this book given it is for the patient. This chapter is also in the wrong place – it should precede the two drug chapters, assuming that diet and lifestyle advice should be the first step or cornerstone of weight management. The dietary advice in the “Improving Practice” section is not wrong, it is just too general. The scientific literature indicates this type of general dietary advice is not specific enough to allow those who follow it to achieve weight loss. Finally, there is a glossary of terms and list of relevant websites.

This is an odd book. It seems very advanced for the average patient, and is promoting those who do choose to read the book to seek medication. Overall this book is not to be recommended as “best medicine”.