



Sylvia R. Karasu M.D.
The Gravity of Weight

Sorting Through the Information Explosion about Weight

Casting a wider scholarly net amidst the expanding literature.



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We are "lost in publication" with an avalanche of articles on weight control over the past few years

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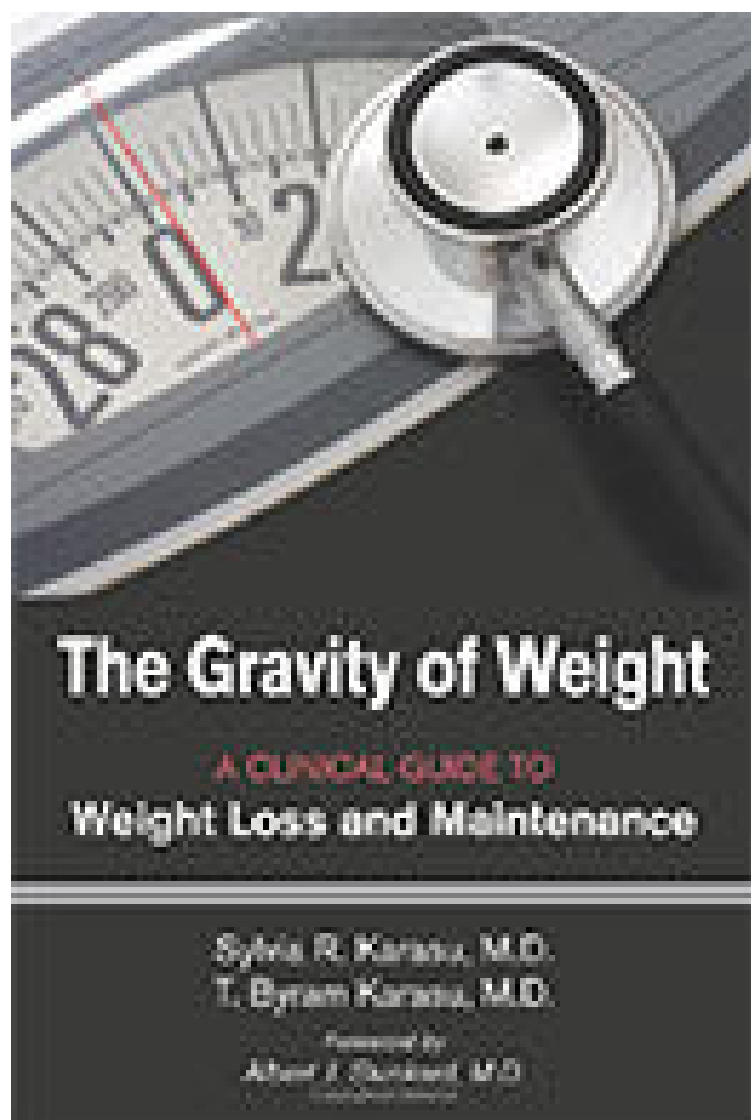
Not only have American (and even worldwide) waistlines expanded exponentially over the past three decades; so has the professional literature on diet and weight-related topics. According to a recent systematic review by Baier and colleagues, in the *International Journal of Obesity*, over 250 different professional journals include articles on the topic, though there are only three journals devoted exclusively to the subject of obesity. And these authors had not even included journals in such fields as economics and consumer affairs. Other researchers have described the situation of the information explosion as "lost in publication." In

other words, if people want to keep up with the field, they have to cast a much wider scholarly net.

That was certainly my impression from writing my recently published book, *The Gravity of Weight*, (2010, American Psychiatric Publishing), a comprehensive text on all aspects of weight control written primarily for health professionals, such as psychologists, social workers, nutritionists, nurses, and physicians in all the medical and psychiatric specialties, as well as their intellectually curious patients. The book is a mind, brain, body integration that explores why weight control is so daunting for so many people. I culled research from over 900 sources, including articles from popular newspapers like *The New York Times*, and journals such as *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*, Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews, and even the *Journal of Consumer Research*. In my book, I discuss some of the classic papers on obesity, such

as Pavlov's early 20th century studies on satiety and sham feeding (in which Pavlov prevented the ingested food of his dogs to reach their stomachs) to cutting edge research on the newly discovered existence of substantial areas of brown fat in adults, which may be a "metabolic brake" that might lead eventually to genetic or pharmacological treatments for obesity.

What I have in mind for readers of my new blog, *The Gravity of Weight*, the daunting science of weight control, is to distill relevant information from scientific journals in diverse areas of expertise on weight-related subjects, from the "usual suspects" of diet and exercise to the more unusual, such as the connection between weight and circadian rhythms. My next blog posting will discuss the connection between "light pollution" and weight.



Source: Photo of book cover by Sylvia R. Karasu, M.D.

About the Author



Sylvia R. Karasu, M.D., is a clinical professor of psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College and the senior author of *The Gravity of Weight*.

In Print: *The Gravity of Weight: A Clinical Guide to Weight Loss and Maintenance*

Online: my own website

