Ten putative contributors to the obesity epidemic.
The obesity epidemic is a global issue and shows no signs of abating, while the cause of this epidemic remains unclear. Marketing practices of energy-dense foods and institutionally-driven declines in physical activity are the alleged perpetrators for the epidemic, despite a lack of solid evidence to demonstrate their causal role. While both may contribute to obesity, we call attention to their unquestioned dominance in program funding and public efforts to reduce obesity, and propose several alternative putative contributors that would benefit from equal consideration and attention. Evidence for microorganisms, epigenetics, increasing maternal age, greater fecundity among people with higher adiposity, assortative mating, sleep debt, endocrine disruptors, pharmaceutical iatrogenesis, reduction in variability of ambient temperatures, and intrauterine and intergenerational effects as contributing factors to the obesity epidemic are reviewed herein. While the evidence is strong for some contributors such as pharmaceutical-induced weight gain, it is still emerging for other reviewed factors. Considering the role of such putative etiological factors of obesity may lead to comprehensive, cause specific, and effective strategies for prevention and treatment of this global epidemic.
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